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The Little Drummer

Gustav Nieritz, H. W. (Henry William) Dulcken, John Gilbert

Willard

1882

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THE
LITTLE DRUMMER.



Front.

Augustus teaching peasants the art of beating the drum.—P. 114.

Augustus teaching Germans the art of beating the drum.—1842.

THE
LITTLE DRUMMER:

OR,

FILIAL AFFECTION.

A Story of the Russian Campaign.

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN GILBERT.  
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LONDON:
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PREFACE.

THE judicious mingling of historical truth with pleasant fiction, has at all times been justly considered a desirable object in the production of books for the amusement and instruction of the young. There is doubtless many a lad now living among us, in whom a taste for the study of history has been pleasantly but surely called forth, by the perusal of such a book as Miss Strickland's *Edward Evelyn*. Works of this class are calculated to leave on a youth's mind a desire to learn more of the subjects about which he has been reading, while he may turn satiated from the most elaborate treatise of a Mignet or a Lamartine. With the aim of thus combining the *utile* with the

dulce, this slight sketch of Napoleon's celebrated Russian Campaign has been produced. It is taken, as its title implies, from the *Jugendschriften* of Gustav Nieritz, stories "familiar as household words" in the mouth of every German schoolboy.

Whatever may be the merits or demerits of this little book, the translator feels assured that nothing will be found, on the one hand, to excite horror, or on the other, to instil into the youthful mind those false notions concerning what is called "the Glory of War," which the present age so rightly and universally condemns.

H. D.

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THE LITTLE DRUMMER.

CHAPTER I.

THE SICK CHILD.

THERE was sorrow and tribulation in the house of Master Wunsch, the saddler; for Emily, his infant daughter, was very ill. The poor child lay tossing in a burning fever, which threatened to put an untimely end to her innocent life. Many and fervent were the prayers offered up by the anxious parents to Him who alone could send help in their time of need.—The sixth night of Emily's illness had arrived. In a room dimly lighted by the flickering rays of a night-lamp, still further shaded by a large book placed on end before it, by way of screen, stood the cradle of the little sufferer,

over whom the mother bent in speechless anxiety. Though for six nights sleep had not closed her weary eyes, she still watched beside her darling's pillow with that deep and untiring affection which none but a mother's heart can feel. As the clock of a neighbouring church struck twelve, the door was opened softly, and the saddler entered. Advancing on tiptoe to the cradle, he enquired anxiously—"No better yet?"

The mother shook her head mournfully as she pointed to the cradle in which the child lay rolling restlessly from side to side, with glowing cheeks and fluttering breath. For a moment Master Wunsch stood silently regarding the sick baby; then he said, kindly,—“Now go to bed, dear wife; it is my turn to watch.”

“No,” replied she; “I could not sleep, even if I were to lie down—I should be only the more anxious away from the child.”

“But, dearest wife, consider your health,”

remonstrated the saddler; "you will never be able to bear all this fatigue; and the end will be that I shall have two invalids in the house instead of one."

"Do not fear for me," was the reply. "You stand more in need of rest than I, for you have to earn bread for us all, and you cannot work without sleep. Alas! these are hard times, and we must exert ourselves more than ever to keep the wolf from the door,—that unhappy billeting, too, costs so much money. To-day we shall have twenty Frenchmen to provide for, who will want the best of everything. But I shouldn't mind all that, if poor little Emily were only out of danger. I am dreadfully alarmed about her."

After trying in vain to induce his wife to lie down, Master Wunsch retired to his bed, leaving her sitting by the cradle. But exhausted nature could bear no more, the weary head sunk gradually back, and the

hand relaxing its grasp, ceased to rock the cradle. In a few minutes the good mother was in a deep sleep.

“Drink—drink,” cried the child, half in delirium. “Drink!” repeated little Emily, in a louder voice.

Still the mother did not stir. The little one burst into a fit of passionate crying. At this moment the door of the adjoining bed-room was opened, and Emily’s brother Augustus, a boy of fourteen years, hurried in half undressed.

“Be quiet, dear Emily,” said he, coaxingly; “you shall have something to drink in a minute.” So saying he warmed some tea over the night-lamp, and, after testing its temperature, offered it to the child.

“Mother give it,” sobbed Emily, fretfully.

“Our mother cannot, dear child,” answered the brother, soothingly; “she is asleep. You see poor mother is tired, so very tired. She has been watching beside

you these six nights, and you see there she sits still. Come, drink, dear Emily."

The cup was eagerly snatched by the feverish patient, who drank greedily, and sank back on her pillow. Augustus began gently to rock the cradle.

"Sing, sing," cried she.

Augustus complied, and sang, in a low voice, a little cradle song, beginning—

"Sleep, baby, sleep ;
Angels hover round thy head,
Close thine eyes and guard thy bed,
Sleep, baby, sleep."

"But, dearest child, you must not toss about and throw off the bed-clothes in that way, or you will catch cold," expostulated the boy, carefully arranging the covering round his sister.

"More drink," cried she again,—“water, not tea."

Augustus did as she wished, and warmed some water for her. Thus it continued

throughout the whole night. Too feverish to sleep, the child started up in bed every minute, and Augustus had to cover her up, to give her drink, and to sing his song over and over again.

As morning dawned little Emily became quieter. The crimson flush faded from her cheek, and gave place to a deathlike pallor. Her eyes remained longer closed, her breathing was more regular, but heavy and oppressed. An unearthly stillness pervaded the room, as the flame of the expiring lamp flickered fitfully up. The weathercocks on the neighbouring houses creaked as they swung to and fro in the morning breeze, which moaned so dismally in the chimney that the boy felt quite frightened. A cold shudder crept over him, as with teeth chattering with the cold he sung his cradle song. The thought suddenly fell like a thunderbolt upon his soul—"What if the angels should close thy sister's eyes FOR EVER?"

For a time he felt strangely depressed, and at length found relief in a flood of tears. Alas! they were all so fond, so very fond of the droll, sensible little child. Every new word she learnt to lisp, every sound of her merry laugh, was to them a source of interest and pleasure. And to think that the cheerful voice might so soon be hushed, the dimpled face become cold as marble, the laughing eyes close to open no more—that an ugly coffin was to be Emily's cradle, and worms were to eat her delicate limbs. Oh, the thought seemed too hard to bear!

As the clock struck five the mother started from her chair with a cry of alarm. "Merciful heavens! what have I done," exclaimed she. "Wretch that I am, I have neglected my child;" and she wrung her hands in anguish as she gazed at the infant.

"Never fear, dear mother," said Augustus, turning away his face to hide his tears.

"I have been here, and have taken care of little Emily."

"But have you been here all the time?" continued the still anxious mother. "I cannot remember at what hour I fell asleep, and perhaps my darling has caught cold, and made herself worse."

The boy, however, consoled his mother by the assurance that such was not the case, and thus relieved her mind from a great burden.

"What a great misfortune you may have prevented by your thoughtfulness," said she, tenderly embracing her son. "I should never have forgiven myself if any harm had happened through my carelessness. Bless you, my good boy."

Overjoyed at having earned his mother's thanks, Augustus went to finish dressing himself, and then proceeded to assist in the various arrangements which had to be made for the expected guests.

CHAPTER II.

THE UNWELCOME GUESTS.

“How I should like to be a soldier!” observed the saddler’s younger son, Robert, a sturdy urchin of eight years, as with his sister Bertha, a girl rather older than himself, he was arranging the long table. “How I should like to be a soldier,” repeated he: “They are such lucky fellows; they get Sunday dinner every day,—Did you see the splendid piece of veal, roasted as brown as a nut, which my mother is preparing in the kitchen? My father has sent for twenty quarts of beer and three quarts of spirits, and I never in all my life saw such an immense dish of potato-salad—I’m so fond of it—I hope the soldiers will leave some for me.”

“And the great loaves of new bread,”

interrupted Bertha, "and five large pieces of fresh butter, as yellow as gold."

"And such a number of cheeses," chimed in Robert; "what gluttons they must be if they devour it all."

A noise was heard in the street.

"They're coming, they're coming," cried Bertha, running to the window.

In a few minutes heavy footsteps were heard ascending the stairs. The startled children ran out of the room.

The noisy foreigners took possession of the rooms assigned to them. Muskets and caps, knapsacks and swords, were flung pell-mell into a corner, and in less than five minutes the unbidden guests had explored every room in the house, and shouted and sang like men who felt themselves perfectly at home.

In the meantime a workman of Master Wunsch's was assisting the servant in carrying up the dinner prepared for the

Frenchmen. It was not without a feeling of envy that little Robert saw the before-mentioned splendid piece of veal and the mighty dish of potato-salad carried up stairs for demolition. Augustus, who could speak a little French, was sent to call the soldiers together by the magic words:—"Messieurs, on a servi;" a summons they lost no time in obeying. As soon as it became apparent, by the clatter of plates and spoons, that dinner had begun, the saddler's family retired to little Emily's sick room, which had been converted for the time being into a sitting room.

Suddenly, however, the sound of angry words was heard in the room above. A volley of imprecations was thundered out by furious voices, and a crash in the street below, as of some heavy substance, caused Mrs. Wunsch to run in alarm to the window. Looking out, she saw that the peaceable guests were pouring away the beer in large

streams, and bombarding the passers by with the cheeses. As she looked, the heavy loaves came thundering down like mill-stones. Poor little Robert cried with vexation, when he saw the much-lauded veal lying in the road, among the ruins of the baking-dish, and surrounded by a large mass of potato-salad. Master Wunsch hurried up stairs, and, rushing past the weeping and terrified servant girl, nearly fell over his journeyman, whom the French soldiers had summarily ejected.

Such a scene was enough to ruffle the mildest temper. Wunsch and the workman looked at each other with eyes sparkling with rage, and longed to inflict a well-deserved chastisement on the brutal foreigners. But what was to be done? They were only two men against twenty, who were besides armed with deadly weapons.

"Augustus," cried the saddler, in a voice trembling with anger, as he re-entered the

sick room, "run as fast as you can to the colonel's quarters, and inform against the rascals. Beg one of the officers to accompany you hither."

The boy ran off to execute his commission. During his absence the tumult increased more and more, as none of Wunsch's people dared show their faces. After a while the messenger returned, alone and breathless.

"Well!" eagerly inquired the father; "why did you not bring the officer with you?"

"Alas, father," answered the boy, "there is no redress to be had there. When I had made my request known, the gentlemen told me that no one would think of acting against troops for such a trifle, particularly after a fatiguing march, when they had every right to expect a very good dinner. And so the gentlemen turned their backs and would listen to nothing I had to say.

And only think, father, what I saw as I came back; it is really too dreadful! You know, a number of the Rhenish troops have just arrived—the broad street is quite crowded with them. Well, before they were dismissed to their quarters, newly baked rye loaves were distributed to each man. What do you think these reckless, wasteful people did?—They laid down the loaves in a double row all across the street, and walked to and fro over them, shouting with laughter, ‘To keep their boots from getting dirty,’ they said. A few even tore the insides out of the loaves, and, putting them on as overshoes, went shuffling through the mud. The wretches! to waste the gifts of God in such a shameful way.”

The hearers stood aghast at this narrative. At length Master Wunsch broke silence. “If Germans act in this way,” said he, “can we wonder at anything the Frenchmen do!”

“Yes, you are right,” observed the mother; “therefore, dear husband, be calm, and wink at what they have done. Let us send up stairs, and ask what fault the soldiers find with the dinner we have provided. It is better to come to an understanding with them, than that they should break everything in the house, and perhaps ill-use us into the bargain. Does not the Almighty seem pleased to send us joy in another respect. Look at our little Emily, how much better she is; she is sleeping so quietly, and the doctor gives me the best hopes of her recovery. He says the crisis is past, and the danger almost over. We have only to take great care that she is not disturbed. Is not this good news worth a thousand times more than the few dollars you will have to spend, to keep the dissatisfied strangers in good humour.”

The father nodded in cordial acquiescence, as he looked with a joyful smile on the slum-

bering infant. He then cheerfully went to spend part of his hardearned savings in the purchase of poultry and wine, for the use of the unruly foreigners.

Suddenly the house-door was thrown open, and a number of German soldiers appeared in the passage,—“Fifteen privates of the Rhenish corps and a drummer,” gasped the servant girl, holding out the billeting warrant to her startled mistress.

“Merciful heavens!” ejaculated Mrs. Wunsch, “have we not trouble enough already, without this?”

But there was no time to lose in useless lamentation,—deeds, not words, were the order of the day, for the soldiers impatiently demanded to be shown to a room.

“Take them into the workshop,” said Wunsch, after a moment’s reflection, “I would rather give my men a holiday, than expose my child to new danger.”

Leaving little Emily in the charge of

Robert and Bertha, the mother hurried into the kitchen to provide, as quickly as possible, for the entertainment of the new comers.

But the soldiers were not to be satisfied so easily. The saddler's wife had been absent but a few minutes, before she heard footsteps approaching, and the din of angry voices. She could distinctly hear that the Germans were entering Emily's room, and flew like an arrow to bear off her precious treasure—the sick child. In an agony of alarm, she threw herself in the path of the soldiers, who noisily entered the apartment.

“Do you think that we are dogs, you blockheads,” roared the brutal drummer, “and that you can shut us up in any kennel you choose. You're mistaken, I tell you.—Those braggadocio Frenchmen are accommodated with the best room in the house, and we Germans are thrust into a little den which looks out upon the back yard. What, are those monkeys so much better than we?

—Don't we spill our best blood for you in the battle-field as well as they?—We'll stay where we are, comrades, and no one shall make us stir an inch."

"Gentlemen, dear gentlemen," sobbed the poor mother, "have compassion on my sick child, who lies yonder, enjoying a quiet sleep for the first time these six days. Alas! are there not some among you who can sympathize with my affliction!—have you no pretty children of your own at home, of whom you think with affection! No! I am sure you do not wish to harm my baby."

While speaking thus, Mrs. Wunsch was employed in taking from the soldiers their knapsacks and muskets, which she deposited in a corner, as noiselessly as possible. After renewing her request for silence, she hurried back into the kitchen, leaving Robert and Bertha sitting at Emily's bedside.

For a short time the men behaved peacefully enough. Drawing their chairs to the

table, they began to converse together in a low tone; but the drummer grew impatient at the non-appearance of the dinner. He sat muttering low curses between his teeth, and presently broke out into noisy abuse.

“What are the rascally people keeping us waiting for?” shouted he; “if we were Frenchmen, I warrant they’d move faster. I suppose they’re scraping together the dinner the Frenchmen flung into the street, and want to dish it up again for us. Zounds! I shouldn’t wonder if our slut of a hostess were to do it, as she wanted at first to shut us up in that doghole of a workshop. Wait a bit, my lady, I’ll teach you manners,—it’s a good thing I know your weak point.” So saying, he cast a malicious glance at the innocent child, whom his voice, purposely raised to its highest pitch, had failed to rouse from its deep sleep. Robert and Bertha stood like guardian angels by the cradle, looking with speechless fear at the

tall soldier, whose grey eyes sparkled with fury. Both turned pale as they saw him seize his drum, and draw his chair to Emily's cradle. Unable to utter a word, they bent over their sleeping sister, entreating the barbarian's mercy by looks of anxious dread. But the drummer did not, or would not, understand this eloquent language of the heart. With a loud burst of laughter, he took the drum between his legs—"Bah!" cried he, "it wont do the brat any harm, if I teach its mother to move faster."

Canst thou picture to thyself, gentle reader, what my pen shudders to record? It is no effort of the imagination, no falsehood; for woe to that man whose fancy can give birth to such hideous phantoms.

With her tiny hands crossed upon her bosom, the little Emily lay sleeping in her innocence, unconscious that the eyes of that human hyæna were glaring upon her. As she lay with her angel face half shaded by golden

locks, and tinged with the faint hue of returning health, she seemed the very emblem of a spotless being fresh from the hand of the Almighty. But though the barbarian saw this lovely image—though he saw imploring looks fixed upon him by the terrified brother and sister—he had yet the heart to seize his drumsticks, and beat a loud roll.

A cry of horror sprang from the lips of the children. The sleeping child started violently. Her blue eyes opened slowly, and gazed in astonishment at the bearded stranger, whose hands had called forth the dreadful sounds. A moment more, and the eyes were turning wildly in their sockets—the angel countenance became livid—and the battle of life with death had begun.—Who is that rushing into the room like a lioness despoiled of her young? It is the mother. Her oppressed bosom cannot utter a sound, but she casts herself in agony at

the drummer's feet, and seizes his ruthless hands!—Her next glance rests upon her dying babe!—Snatching it from the cradle, she holds it high above her head—"Air, air may yet revive it!" She bedews the senseless infant with her tears. She calls her darling by the most endearing names. Vain, alas, is the attempt to stay the departing spirit!

The death struggle was soon over. The tiny limbs stretched themselves—the heart ceased to throb—and the innocent soul returned to Him who gave it.

With a shriek that rang through the house, the mother sank fainting to the ground. A moment after the drummer fell also, struck by the father's avenging hand; he had followed his wife into the room, and now punished the deed of murder. After defending himself with the energy of desperation, his sword was at length wrested from him, and he was bound hand and foot by the soldiers.

CHAPTER III.

THE GOOD SON.

EARLY on the third morning after the events related in the preceding chapter, a man in a black cloak was seen to issue from Master Wunsch's door, carrying a child's coffin, slung round his neck by a broad strap. He was followed by a woman in mourning garments, and by the saddler's three children, Augustus, Bertha, and Robert. Their eyes were swollen with weeping, and the tears still flowed fast, as the little group wended their way through the empty streets towards the neighbouring cemetery. The beams of the rising sun tinged the white tombstones and the black crosses with a golden lustre, as the great gate swung creaking on its hinges, and admitted the mourners. Everything around seemed to tell of death and

decay,—the angels with inverted torches—the skeletons with scythes—the weeping statues on the tombs.

Stopping before a newly-made grave, the bearer unbuckled the coffin, and set it gently down.

“Do you wish to see your little sister once more?” kindly inquired the nurse. The sobbing children nodded assent, and the coffin-lid was thrown back. There, with her pale face surrounded by a chaplet of roses, and her tiny hands grasping a wreath of summer flowers, lay the little Emily. The expression of perfect repose in her countenance gave her the appearance of a sleeping angel. Even in her lifetime the child had never appeared more lovely than now, as she lay cold in death. At this sight the mourners broke out into loud lamentations. Stooping down to kiss the cheek of his little sister, Augustus started back with a shudder at its icy coldness. But the

nurse said solemnly—"Let the dead rest; disturb them not, they are happy!"

The coffin-lid was shut, the cords creaked as the yawning grave received its prey, the service was over, and little Emily slept peacefully beside her grandparents, and a baby brother who had died in his infancy. When the grave had been filled up, the children turned away, and sorrowfully quitted the churchyard. For a time they walked on in mournful silence, which Bertha was the first to break. "Alas!" said she, "suppose our mother were to die too! I heard the doctor saying yesterday that she was in a dangerous state."

"Oh, dear!" sobbed poor little Robert, and "suppose the soldiers were to do as they threaten, and really shoot our poor father! What should we do then? We should have to go into the orphan's house, and sing in the streets."

Augustus did not answer, but continued

to walk on in deep thought. Suddenly he stood still and asked his sister—"What said the text, Bertha, that we learnt at school last Saturday?"

"How came you to think of the text?" said Bertha, looking at him in astonishment.

"I want to know what it was," insisted Augustus.

"It was—'We should lay down our life for our brethren,'" replied his sister, after a moment's consideration.

"That was it," said the boy. "Do you see—we should lay down our life for our brethren,—how much more then for our parents! Robert," continued he, after a pause, "I will give you my two pigeons, they shall be yours; but mind you do not neglect them, or forget to give them food every day."

"What!" cried little Robert, forgetting his grief for a moment in surprise and joy at the unexpected present, "do you really

mean to give me your pigeons, of which you are so fond?"

"I care for nothing now," sorrowfully answered the other. "My little Emily is dead, our mother is dangerously ill, and in few days our father may be no more." After another mournful pause, he added—"Bertha, when our mother has recovered, and they have set father free, repeat the text to them—you know which I mean—then they will feel resigned, and will not be angry with me. And you must tell them that for their sakes I gladly went to—to join our Emily."

"What can you mean!" cried both the children together.

"Hush, hush," answered Augustus, "you will learn in time. But promise me you will not say anything about this to our mother until she is quite well."

Robert and Bertha did as he wished, and they returned somewhat comforted. Au-

gustus ran to his mother's bedside, and seizing her unconscious hand, bedewed it with his tears. He felt as though his heart would break; and, alas, how gladly would he have confided to his mother what he purposed doing! But poor Mrs. Wunsch was delirious, and two nurses were obliged to hold her in bed by force. When her son entered the room in his black dress, she shrieked out—"There is the black drummer with the great beard come to kill my child! Drive him away, or my husband will stab him!" The poor boy rushed from the house half frantic with grief.

"Back!" cried the sentinel, who was walking to and fro before the door of the prison in which the saddler was confined, as his son attempted to cross the threshold.

"But it is my father," remonstrated Augustus,—“I want so much to see him.”

"Can't be done," replied the stranger, gruffly, as he resumed his walk.

"I entreat you, for pity's sake," pleaded the poor boy, bursting into tears. "Do let me go to him, I have come to bid him farewell."

"Can't be done," repeated the Frenchman. "Besides, what good would your visit do him. A bottle of wine would be of much more use than your whimpering, for it would give him a little heart to set out on his last promenade with. But a parting scene with you would take away the little nerve he may have to face the gunbarrels."

While this conversation was going on, several of the passers-by had stood still, and heard what was said. The women now began to murmur loudly.

"It is too bad," said one; "the poor fellow is not even allowed to embrace his father once more."

"Had I been in Master Wunsch's place," cried another, "I should have done exactly as he did!"

"Knock the French dogs on the head!" suggested a third.

The soldier cast an uneasy look on the increasing crowd of angry faces. "I have strict orders," said he, "to admit nobody to the prisoner. If the lad wants to see his father, he must go to the colonel and ask his permission."

Our hero accordingly ran off, followed by some of the townspeople, to the colonel's quarters, a house before which two sentinels were keeping guard. Entering boldly, he found himself in a room thronged with officers, who stood chatting in groups, without noticing Augustus, who looked from one to the other in no small embarrassment. Suddenly the door of a side room opened. The officers stepped respectfully back and formed a large circle, in the centre of which appeared a tall, stout man, attired in a splendid uniform, with several crosses on his breast. Augustus felt his heart sink when

he found himself standing face to face with the dreaded colonel, but summoning up all his courage, he advanced a step or two, and said firmly enough—"Honoured colonel, it is written in the Bible, 'we should deliver up our life for our brethren,' so I have come to beg you to let me be shot instead of my father."

The commandant stepped back at this unexpected address, and stared at the boy in utter amazement. "What!" cried he, with a laugh, "you want to be shot? With popguns, I suppose?"

"Honoured colonel," resumed Augustus, with tears in his eyes, "my errand is anything but a laughable one. In sad earnest, I come to ask you to let me die for my father."

All appearance of mirth fled from the colonel's face. He questioned the boy, who related the circumstances which occasioned his coming, and described his pa-

rents' misery with touching simplicity. The officers hardly knew what to reply, and all felt heartily ashamed of their comrade, the inhuman drummer.

When Augustus had finished his story, the colonel stroked his long moustache, and turned to those around him. "This is a peculiar case," said he; "I cannot set the boy's father at liberty, for it would be establishing a bad precedent. If such a deed were allowed to go unpunished, our people would in future have to submit to insult. To try the prisoner by martial law would never do, for he would most probably be condemned, particularly if the drummer does not recover from his wound, which is very doubtful. Still I pity the man, the more so on account of his brave son. There is no time to appeal to the king's mercy, for the regiment must march, and the drummer's place be supplied in a couple of days—yet stay—I've thought of a plan," continued he, turning towards Augustus, who

had stood in mute anxiety awaiting the result of the conference.

“So, my lad, you really want to be shot instead of your father. That’s no trifle, though the words are soon spoken. But when you come to feel the cold leaden bullets thrill through your flesh, and smash your bones, you’ll sing in another key.” As he said these words the colonel looked sharply at the boy, who only shook his head, without changing colour.

“Provided the man does not die, whom your father has wounded,” continued he, “I think we can manage without having you shot. But then I should require you to supply the vacant place among the drummers, as we march in a couple of days. Have you the courage to do that?”

“You want me to be a drummer!”—cried Augustus, clasping his hands in horror. “Oh, anything in the world, but only not that!—I should never dare to show my face again before my mother, for

since poor Emily's death she cannot endure the sight of a drum, and the sound of one would send her into fits."

"Now just look at the tiresome boy," replied the colonel, angrily; "I wish to do him a kindness, and he doesn't even thank me for my pains. I'll tell you what, my lad, I didn't think you were such a block-head; if I have you shot, you can certainly never show your face before your mother again; but as matters now stand, when you have taken off your uniform and put away your drum, you'll be her dear son just the same as ever. And do you think your father will thank you for your choice, or will ever feel happy, if you purchase his life by the sacrifice of yours?"

"Oh dear!" ejaculated the boy, dolefully, "I am sure I would do anything to save my poor father,—I will even be a drummer, if you are determined not to shoot me."

The officers could scarcely refrain from laughing at this strange speech. "Well,"

said the colonel, "then that matter is settled. But I have a few conditions to make, to which you must agree. In the first place, your father cannot be liberated until the regiment has left the town, a measure for which I have the best reasons. And, secondly, I cannot allow you to see your father before we start,—besides, why should you make the parting more bitter by a sorrowful leavetaking? You had better stop here at once. I will put you under the protection of my old sergeant, Hoyer, who will take care of you, and teach you to handle your drumsticks during the time we remain here, so that your awkwardness may not excite attention."

Augustus could scarcely murmur his thanks. He detested the very idea of becoming a drummer, and thought, in the enthusiasm of the moment, that he would much rather have been shot.

CHAPTER IV.

AUGUSTUS JOINS HIS REGIMENT.

OUR hero drummed and drummed till his arms ached. His master was well satisfied with him, but it was necessary every now and then to tap him on the shoulder, when the boy, absorbed in sorrowful reflections, made too long a pause. Then he would pass the sleeve of his new uniform hastily across his eyes, and begin to drum afresh. At first he could not repress a shudder, as he thought of his murdered sister, and of his mother, who still lay dangerously ill. The dreaded morning soon arrived, on which the regiment was to march.

The old sergeant called him early in the morning, and kindly showed him how to pack his knapsack, so as to save as much room as possible. Poor Augustus nodded

mechanically to all Hoyer said, for he felt his heart heavier than the knapsack at his back, and he dared not trust his voice to speak. Meanwhile the drums were heard calling together the soldiers in the streets. As our hero was a novice, and the colonel wished to avoid exciting attention, it was arranged that he should leave his quarters with sergeant Hoyer, instead of joining the drummers. He thought his heart would burst as he passed his father's door. Robert and Bertha, the maid, and even the journeymen, were anxiously looking out for him at the upper windows, but the curtains of the room in which his mother lay were closely drawn. Raising his tearful eyes, Augustus waved his hand, and called out in a broken voice, "Give my love to our father and mother. Farewell! Farewell all!"

"Augustus! Augustus!" was cried in heartrending accents by those above, and

the heads disappeared like lightning from the window. "They are coming to give me a last embrace," thought the boy, lingering. But Hoyer dragged away his pupil by the arm. "Nonsense," said he, not without emotion; "what's the use of making yourselves more sad than you are already. Allons — forward !" Hurrying towards the market-place they found the whole regiment assembled there. "That is Augustus Wunsch, the good son who is going to battle to save his father's life. Good bye, my brave boy!" cried many voices, as he disappeared among a crowd of his new comrades.

The drummers of the regiment, thirty in number, received orders to advance. Suddenly they found themselves in the midst of hundreds of spectators, mostly children, and several people were seen forcing their way through the crowd. It was Bertha and Robert, with the maid and the journey-

Bertha and Robert bidding farewell to Augustus.—P. 46.



Bertha and Robert bidding farewell to Augustus.—P. 46.

men, who had come to bid the boy a last farewell, and who hung about him unable to utter a word. No one could view the scene without emotion.

Poor Augustus sobbed aloud as he pressed his brother and sister to his heart. His eyes were blinded with tears, and everything appeared to swim around him.

“Quick march ! Forward !” cried the colonel’s deep voice. The drummers struck up a lively tune. Our hero felt himself forcibly torn from his brother’s arms and carried away with the rest. Swinging his drum round his neck, he convulsively grasped his drumsticks, and thundered upon it as though he would beat his grief into the parchment.

His heart seemed torn from his bosom, and in its place he felt an indescribable void, accompanied by the dull smart of a wound newly received. All this time he was mechanically moving forward with his

comrades. After marching for some distance the regiment halted for a short time on a hill. The soldiers drew forth their spirit-flasks, and beguiled the time with joking and laughter.

“Drink, my little friend, drink!” cried one of these worthies, offering his bottle. “Here is the true water of Lethe, which makes one forget all grief and sorrow. Drink, my little warrior.”

Augustus declined the proffered draught, and fixed his eyes upon his native town, which lay before him, lighted up by the beams of the rising sun. “Shall I ever return,”—thought he—“perhaps as a wretched cripple! And my dear parents, have I indeed embraced you for the last time. Farewell then, for ever! Heaven defend you, ye dear ones; think sometimes of your absent son.” Occupied with these thoughts, he hastily wiped away his tears, lest those around him should observe them, and make a jest of his

misery. His comrades were laughing and singing noisily, as though they were going to a feast instead of to battle. "And yet," thought Augustus, "most of these men must have left friends and relations at home, who are offering up anxious prayers for the absent ones."

At length his grief seemed gradually to decrease; for youthful sorrow, though violent, is not lasting. A voice within him seemed to repeat the words of the hymn,—

"With weeping and fretting we nought can gain,
But who prays to God, shall not ask in vain,"

and as he thought of the Almighty, and of his omnipresence, he felt marvellously strengthened. His tears were dried, his heart felt lighter, the love of life returned by degrees, and he rose to continue his march, more refreshed in body and mind than his comrades by the brandy they had drunk.

CHAPTER V.

“WHAT JOY, OH, WHAT PLEASURE, A
SOLDIER TO BE!”

WAS a song Augustus had heard sung by several of his comrades, as they rested on the hill. “How strange!” thought he, “for my part, I should feel inclined to sing,—

“‘What joy, oh, what pleasure no soldier to be!’

Besides, I have always noticed when recruits were drawn for the regiments, the men on whom the lot fell looked very gloomy indeed. I must try to find out who is right.”

Our hero had not to watch long to discover one of the pleasures of a soldier’s life.

The knapsack, to which he was unaccustomed, seemed an intolerable burthen, which was still further increased by the drum being slung over it. The soldiers

were, if anything, even worse off than he, for they had continually to carry a heavy musket on their shoulder. Another, and not a small grievance, was the cloud of dust which surrounded the regiment on the high roads. In a short time the dark uniforms were completely covered with it, and instead of pure air, the men inhaled a fine white powder, which seemed to dry up the mouth and throat, and penetrate even into the lungs. Every now and then they passed a well of pure limpid water, but very few of the thirsty soldiers received permission to leave the ranks for the purpose of filling their bottles,—the majority were to march by, thirsty and uncomplaining. Bathed in perspiration, aching in every limb, and almost exhausted, Augustus at length arrived in the village where the regiment was to dine, it was already one o'clock, and he had eaten nothing that day. Hungry as the men were, however, they had to wait for

more than half an hour before they were billeted on the different farm-houses, where the owners had made preparations for the expected but unwelcome guests. With twenty of his comrades, Augustus entered a room where a long table was laid out in readiness for them, with large loaves, cheeses, and butter. Brandy and beer had also been plentifully provided. When the soldiers had disencumbered themselves of their knapsacks and muskets, they sat down to the table, on which large dishes of salted pork and dumplings presently appeared. The peasant who rented the farm, with his wife and family, took their stations behind the soldiers' chairs to attend to their wants, and the father uncovered his grey head in expectation of hearing grace said. But the novice Augustus was the only one who whispered the accustomed blessing; the others immediately fell upon the dinner, which was furnished in profusion. The

customary bickering soon began, by the soldiers swearing horribly at the tough, stringy meat and the hard dumplings. One gentleman compared the latter to four-pound cannon balls, while another offered to carry out the simile by breaking their entertainers' heads with them. It was in vain that the frightened hostess protested that the dinner had been ready for two hours, and had been spoiled by standing so long; the soldiers were with difficulty prevented from breaking the plates and dishes. Augustus meanwhile patiently forced down the tough fare, which was rendered still more unpalatable by the sourest of beer. When the soldiers made this discovery, there was a renewal of the disturbance.

"My good sirs," said the farmer, "we have to drink beer such as this nearly all the year round, and to pay a good round price for it besides. You must complain to our landlord, who compels us to buy it."

"You may thank your stars," replied one, "that we are Germans and not Frenchmen, who would have thrown the stuff in your faces and made you furnish wine, whether you liked it or not."

"Those who have no wine can give none," was the answer. "Where there's nothing to take, there's nothing to have."

In spite of all their grumbling and scolding, the guests had meanwhile managed to clear the board of all that was eatable, and they now dispersed to employ the remainder of their time as best they might. While some slipped into the dairy to pilfer the cream, others made particular inquiry as to the situation of the poultry-yard and dovecote. Some climbed into the loaded cherry trees, and a few were not too proud to pay their dutiful respects to the basket of cheeses. Left to himself in the long room, our hero found the feeling of despondency return with double force: "What are they

doing at home?" thought he; "when shall I ever see them again?" He was roused from his reverie by a noise in the yard, where the peasants were trying to rescue their property from the marauders.

Augustus felt deeply ashamed of his comrades, and was debating with himself whether he ought not to go out and reproach them with their dishonesty, when he was surprised by a cry from a child's voice from the far corner of the room, and for the first time noticed a little girl, who had been asleep in a cradle behind the great stove, and who seemed not unlike his own little sister. Lifting the child gently from her bed, he began to dandle her in his arms; the little one stopped crying at the sound of his friendly voice, looked in wonder at her strange nurse, and began playing with his gay shoulder-knots. The boy was walking laughingly up and down with his charge, when the door was opened by the

hostess. The expression of her flushed and angry face changed in an instant, when she saw what the drummer was about.

“He seems to be the only lamb among those wolves,” said she. “I thought so at once, when I saw how quietly he said his grace, and how well he behaved at table;—just look at the child, what a fancy she has taken to the boy! I’ll warrant you’ve just such a little sister at home, eh?” continued she, addressing our hero.

“I had one,” was the sorrowful answer, “but my predecessor drummed it to death.”

“Drummed it to death!” cried the woman, with a look of horror; “how was that? Tell me.”

Augustus was about to reply, when the drums were heard in the distance.

“That’s the recall,” said he, hurrying away; “I must go and join my comrades.”

“Wait one moment,” said the hostess, running out of the room, and reappearing a

moment after with a dish of ripe cherries. "Take these with you—you are welcome to them—and you have earned them honestly." So saying, she filled all his pockets with the fruit, and dismissed him with a cordial farewell.

Once more joining his comrades, our hero was soon marching at the head of the regiment. The heat and dust were as oppressive as in the morning, but the cherries were a capital refreshment to the thirsty lad. Late in the evening they reached a considerable town, where quarters had been assigned for the night, to the great joy of the troops, who were in high glee at the prospect of a plentiful supper and good accommodation after the fatigues of the day, and waited impatiently until they were dismissed to their lodgings. The interval while supper was preparing, was occupied in cleaning muskets and dirks, brushing uniforms, and the refreshing use of soap and water, and the

razor. The knapsacks were next opened, and a number of pilfered articles of all descriptions brought to light. One man ran into the kitchen with half-a-dozen eggs, which he wanted boiled. Another produced a stolen chicken, and a third a couple of doves, intended as provision for the road next day. With a shout of laughter, a fourth produced a decapitated goose, which he held up in triumph, to the envy and admiration of his less successful comrades. "As I was trudging along through the garden," said he, "this chatterbox thrust her long neck between the palings of her yard, and hissed vigorously at me; 'Your servant, ma'am,' thought I, 'you're the very person I want,' and I drew my dirk and cut her head off at a blow. The jade ought to be fat—at least, she weighed heavy enough in my knapsack;"—so saying, he took it into the kitchen to be cooked.

The hosts had provided most sumptu-

ously for the men's entertainment; even the most inveterate of those habitual grumblers could find no fault with the glorious roast beef, the fresh crisp salad, and the foaming beer placed on the board, to which the hungry troops sat down in high good humour. They were employed in discussing the first spoonfuls of their soup, when the door was thrown hastily open, and a young officer strode into the room, clanking his heavy spurs.

"Drummer," he cried, "beat the rappel—quick!"

These words produced an universal consternation among the soldiers; the spoons fell from their hands, and all sat as if petrified, staring in ludicrous dismay at the messenger. Sergeant Hoyer was the first who recovered himself sufficiently to stammer out, "Are you in earnest, lieutenant? Are the men to march again to-night, after all the fatigue they have had to-day?"

"I never joke with my inferiors!" replied the young lieutenant, haughtily;—"remember that, if you please; and remember, too, that when you speak to your superior officer, it is your duty to rise from your seat. Haven't you learnt so much as that yet?—Don't you see that you are setting a bad example to the men, which I suppose is the reason why the boors remain sitting so quietly in my presence.—Zounds! you rascals, I'll teach you discipline!"

Hoyer and the soldiers rose from their seats like automats strung on a wire. Without moving a muscle, the old sergeant listened to the insulting words of the young lieutenant, whose father he might well have been, both in age and experience. No sign of anger or impatience was visible in his countenance, which had, however, become somewhat pale. When the officer had finished his polite speech, he answered, in a respectful tone—

"May not the men finish their supper, lieutenant?"

"No!" answered the lieutenant; "it must be left for the Frenchmen, who will arrive presently, and for whom we are to make room. I shall stay here, and see that nothing is touched."

The hungry soldiers cast many a longing, lingering look at the table, as they reluctantly prepared to depart. The before-mentioned proprietor of the goose made an attempt to sneak into the kitchen, in the hope of rescuing his prize.

"Whither away?" asked the lieutenant, calling him back.

"Into the — kitchen," stammered the man; "I was going—"

"Stay where you are!" commanded the officer. At this moment he observed that the drummer was still present. "Why, you young scoundrel!" roared he, half drawing his sword, "will you be off this

instant?" Our hero seized his drum, and vanished precipitately.

"One can easily see," muttered the soldiers among themselves, "that this is our lieutenant's first campaign, or he would not bully his men as he does; he had better mind what he's about. He wouldn't be the first tyrant picked off by his own men on the battle-field."

The village, whither the Rhenish troops had to move on so short a notice, was full three miles distant from the town, and to increase their distress, a heavy storm of rain came pelting down, wetting the exhausted soldiers to the skin. Who could wonder that they felt inclined to murmur, or that the poor peasants, who could offer them nothing but meagre fare and a bed of straw, had to bear the effects of their ill temper.

Stretched on the hard couch beside his companions, our hero had full leisure to reflect on the joy and pleasure of being a

soldier, which by this time appeared to him very small indeed. The insulting behaviour which the good sergeant had to endure from the conceited stripling, annoyed him more than all the rest. As he compared his former condition with his present lot, he could not help sighing at the difference. "However," thought he, "there is no use in repining—

“ ‘ With weeping and fretting we nought can gain,
But who prays to God, shall not ask in vain ; ’ ”

and so saying, he turned round and fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

LIFE AMONG THE SOLDIERS.

AUGUSTUS thought at first, that he should not be able long to endure the fatigues of his new profession; but he found he was mistaken. Every succeeding day, the weight of his knapsack became less oppressive; the long marches were performed with greater ease, and he almost ceased to regard the heat and dust as hardships. He found that he could sleep as soundly on hay or straw as on a feather bed, and rise every morning refreshed and invigorated, even if his sleep had been short. The continual sojourn in the open air—added to the healthy exercise of walking—made his heart light, as the youthful blood coursed gaily through his veins. He felt joyous and happy, without being able exactly to tell why; gradually,

also, as he became a favourite among his companions, he discovered that in general it was not real wickedness, but an excited state of mind, which led them into all manner of excess. What disgusted him more than anything else, was their almost universal habit of profane swearing; every one seemed ashamed to pray, but always ready to blaspheme. The most diabolical oaths were uttered on the most trifling provocation. One day, Augustus could not help exclaiming openly against this pernicious practice; it happened in this way:—

One evening, as the soldiers were, according to custom, brushing their uniforms, a button fell from the coat of one of them, the man immediately gave vent to a frightful imprecation.

“Oh you dreadful sinner!” cried the boy, “to take God’s name in vain for the sake of a miserable button!”

His comrade stared at him in amazement.

"Don't be a fool!" replied he; "who'd take things in that way?"

"Did you not take God's name in vain?" insisted our hero.

"Bah! you know I didn't mean it," was the reply; "it was only my fun."

"Fun," repeated Augustus. "Do you remember how angry our lieutenant became the other night, when Hoyer thought he was in fun; and how positively he forbade anything like making fun, though, after all, the difference in rank between him and father Hoyer is not so very great. And I'm sure you don't allow anybody to make fun with your loaded gun, though you make a jest of the name of the Almighty, which should never be uttered without reverence? It is too bad!"

A forced laugh was the answer to this reproof, but the man nevertheless became more careful in his language, at least before the boy, who also did much good among his

comrades by the example he set. No one ever heard him complain of the weather, the fatiguing marches, bad food, hard couch, or other grievances; nor was he ever seen to treat their entertainers with rudeness, or to appropriate to himself what belonged to others. The sacrifice he had made for his father, added to the goodwill of the colonel and the protection of the sergeant, gave him moreover a certain position in the eyes of the soldiers.

On the first opportunity which presented itself, he wrote the following letter to send home:—

“ MY DEAR FATHER,

“ As our kind colonel has told me that the wicked drummer, who killed our little Emily, has recovered, and is now on his way to rejoin the regiment, I trust you have been set at liberty. I hope our dear mother is quite well again, and has in some measure reco-

vered from the loss of our little sister. You need none of you be anxious about me, for I am quite well, and have never yet been in want. The colonel is very kind to me, and Hoyer still more so. Do you know, a soldier's life is really not so bad as I expected, and we have seen nothing of the enemy yet. But we are certainly only in Poland, and when we get to Russia I suppose we shall see more than enough of them. But tell my mother not to be afraid for me, for all bullets do not hit, as my sergeant tells me, and they are sure to shoot over the head of such a little fellow as I am. Excepting the towns, this same Poland is a real pig's country. Only think—not one of the peasant's huts has a chimney, so that the rooms are always filled with smoke, which finds its way out at little holes left in the walls about three feet from the ground. Instead of carrying the dung to the field, they pile it up in great heaps

round the cottages, each of which is thus surrounded by a filthy morass. On these fragrant heaps may be seen children, crawling about in such a state, that it is disgusting to look upon them. Parents, children, and servants, all look squalid and wretched, covered with dirt and vermin. How our fastidious friends, the Frenchmen, will open their eyes when they see their new quarters! For my part, I like much better to bivouac in the open air, a plan which we have lately adopted. We lie down, wrapped in our cloaks, with our knapsack for a pillow, and the clear sky above us; in the morning we are aroused by the fresh breeze. Sometimes, in fact, he gives us a good shaking, this same fresh breeze, so that I am obliged to take a glass of brandy on rising, as there is no coffee to be had here. But, with this exception, I never drink spirits, neither do I swear or smoke, though my comrades laughed at me at first.

I am afraid there is no chance of getting my discharge, at any rate not for some time to come, as our colonel says we shall soon want plenty of men; so I have quite resigned myself to my fate. I should very much like to know how you all are at home, but a letter could hardly reach me, as we never stay long in one place. Now, dearest father, I must conclude. Give my very best love to dear mother, Robert, and Bertha, and remember me kindly to good Hannah and the workmen. As soon as possible, I will write again; till then, good bye, God bless you all.

“Your affectionate

“AUGUSTUS.”

This letter occasioned great rejoicing in Master Wunsch's family. The parents shed tears of joy over their good son, mingled with some bitter ones, at the thought of his absence. Robert and Bertha jumped about

and clapped their hands, old Hannah chuckled with pleasure to find that her young master had not forgotten her, and the workmen were loud in their praises of brave Augustus. The letter was read to half the population of the town. Master Wunsch was, for his part, anxious to travel after the army, and purchase his discharge at any price; he was only dissuaded from carrying his resolution into effect, by the earnest remonstrances of his friends, who saw the hopelessness of the undertaking, and the danger of leaving his wife alone and unprotected in the present unsettled state of affairs.

CHAPTER VII.

“LA GRANDE ARMÉE.”

IN the summer of the year 1812, the French army crossed the Russian frontier. Such a body of men, so completely armed and accoutred, had never before been seen in Europe. Half a million of infantry, 80,000 cavalry, and more than twelve hundred pieces of cannon, composed this redoubtable mass. Its ranks were swelled by auxiliaries from almost every European state: Austrians, Prussians, Bavarians, Westphalians, men of Wurtemberg, Saxony, Baden, Holland, and Italy, and all clad in the gayest uniforms. Well might the Emperor Napoleon rejoice as the innumerable swarm of warriors defiled past him. It was, in truth, a splendid sight. The blue-clad infantry regiments marched past, in serried

ranks, broad as a mighty river. First came the soul-inspiring music, then the rattling drums, and these were followed in their turn by three rows of bearded pioneers, with white leathern aprons, and glittering axes. All was *one* step, *one* grasp, and *one* motion. The soldiers looked like moving walls, as their bayonets flashed in the sun. Instead of a banner, a golden eagle with expanded wings was borne at the head of each regiment. The emperor's guards particularly distinguished themselves. In their tall bear-skin caps they looked like bearded giants.—They were, however, surpassed in splendour of appearance by the guards from Holland, who were clad in uniforms of the finest cloth, much too good for rough service. The immense masses of cavalry were, perhaps, the most remarkable of all. Numerous regiments of chasseurs rode in the van, in green uniforms with red facings; their burnished helmets were bordered with a piece

of fur—in imitation of a tiger's-skin—and ornamented with a horse-hair plume. Behind these rode the hussars, in their tagged jackets and low fur caps, from which depended a red bag with a gold tassel. They were mounted on horses of a gigantic breed, and preceded—like the rest of the regiments—by military music. But all the thousands of sabres, drawn in honour of the emperor, were destined to be dyed in human gore; the whole of that brilliant mass of warriors was trained to—murder. Grey-headed men shook their heads and sighed, as they stood at their cottage doors, and saw the lumbering cannon, each drawn by six or eight horses, and surrounded by artillerymen with burning matches, roll heavily by; and many there were, who had a dark foreboding of calamity to come.

Our hero, however, felt nothing of all this, as in his turn he passed before the emperor. He had eyes only for Napoleon,

who sat on horseback in the midst of his brilliant staff. Surrounded as he was by brilliant uniforms, his attire seemed the more remarkable for its simplicity—he wore a green coat, ornamented by a single star, white knee-breeches, and heavy riding-boots. He was short of stature, and rather corpulent; his eyes were unusually keen and piercing, his nose was aquiline, and his complexion sallow. Such was the man who from a simple lieutenant had raised himself to be the chief of a mighty nation—who had led his victorious legions over the burning plains of Africa and the snow-clad summits of the Alps—who could dare, sword in hand, to issue his mandates to the cabinets of Europe—and who, ten short years afterwards, was sleeping in an island of the ocean, with a plain marble slab to mark his resting-place, and a willow-tree drooping over his lonely tomb.

On crossing the Russian frontier, Napo-

leon had addressed his soldiers in words like the following :—"Soldiers ! once more does a field of fame lie stretched before you. From the plains of the Pyramids to this land, you have trodden the path of victory. It is for you to continue in it. We will conquer these barbarians, the Russians, and drive them from Europe. Within two months I will lead you to the capital of the ancient czars, to Moscow. There you will rest from your fatigues, and enjoy in quiet the fruits of your valour. Then I will dictate a peace, and lead you back to your fatherland, covered with glory."

How well were it for this poor sinful world, had the words of truth found so ready a credence as that given by the French soldiers to the boastful promises of Buonaparte. No one dreamed for an instant of doubting the fulfilment of the vaunt, and, from the whole army, as from one man, rose the cry—"Long live the Emperor!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BURNING OF THE MILL.

IN the evening of the day on which the French army had first set foot in Russia, the church bells in Moisevka, a village on the high road leading to Smolensk, rang out a peal at an unusual hour. Old and young repaired to the sanctuary at the unexpected summons. With more of wonder than devotion in their looks, the villagers thronged into the illuminated church, on the steps of which stood a venerable priest, clothed in the vestments of his office. Raising his right hand to command silence, he thus addressed them:—

“ My children! the godless hordes of the French nation have this day invaded the holy soil of our dear native land, to lay it waste with fire and sword. Our troops

have received orders to retreat into the interior, to lure the foe on to their destruction. The French may be here to-morrow, and it becomes our duty to hinder their advance by every means in our power. You must therefore at once break down the bridge across the stream, destroy the wells, burn down your dwellings, and drive the cattle into the interior, that the enemy, on their arrival, may find only a heap of ruins. But first of all, let us pray to the Lord, that He may send a curse upon these miscreants, and utterly destroy them. My children, you are assembled in this church for the last time. I shall apply the torch to it with my own hands, that the Lord's house may be saved from profanation."

The peasants, falling down on their knees, broke out in deep imprecations against their enemies. Then rising, they left the church, and proceeded to the work of demolition. Groups of merry children were chasing each other among the elder bushes

and lime trees, which rustled cheerily in the cool breeze. Murmuring and chafing at its confinement, a stream of pure water rushed through the narrow arches of a massive bridge, crowded by the lowing herds returning from pasture. The great wheel of a water-mill clattered busily round, and in front stood the miller, seemingly lost in thought.

Ere long the cattle were driven from the stables, and the geese, ducks, and hens collected into a large flock. While the women loaded themselves with their greatest treasure, the homespun linen, the men were employed in fastening bundles of straw round the timbers which supported the bridge, and setting fire to them. In a few minutes every dwelling throughout the village was wrapped in flames; the wooden chapel shared the general fate. Driving the cattle before them, the children first left the blazing homesteads; they were followed by the women, heavily laden with

the more valuable of their possessions; the men and the priest brought up the rear.

"How now, Master Naumann?" inquired the latter, in a tone of surprise, of the miller, who had stood all the time, looking at the mill in evident perplexity—"Why do you not follow our example?"

"By your leave, reverend father," replied Naumann, "I really do not know what to say. The cottages, which are burning yonder, can be built with little trouble, but with a mill it is a very different matter. Besides, I am a German by birth; and, as you know, there are plenty of Germans among the invaders, so that I think I shall be left unmolested."

Here some of the Russians angrily interposed, crying out, "Away with the false stranger—burn down the mill over his head—he is a traitor, and a friend to the Frenchmen!"

"Peace!" cried the priest; "let him have his will; I promise you, he will soon repent

it. For my part, I pity his poor wife, our sister Kathinka, and her children. Upon thy head, stranger, be their blood, should any harm befall them!"

The Russians moodily departed. A few hours later, at midnight, the French arrived. The want of a bridge did not prevent their passing the shallow river, but it was necessary to reconstruct it immediately, in order that the cannon which were to follow might cross.

The neighbouring mill, with its massive beams, offered the necessary materials; so, turning a deaf ear to the miller's entreaties, the soldiers immediately set to work at pulling down the outhouses, and compelled the proprietor to assist in the task. How bitterly did Naumann already repent that he had not followed the advice of the priest. More than once he attempted to escape, but was each time driven back by the soldiers, who swore they would shoot him if he did

not desist. They also asserted that the torches did not give enough light; to remedy this evil, the officer in command ordered the mill to be set on fire, which was done with joyful alacrity.' Poor Naumann almost fainted with horror when he saw the flaming mill shed a piercing glare over the landscape, and thought of his wife and children. In spite of his prayers and protestations, his brutal captors refused to let him give the alarm, and compelled him, by hard blows, to continue working.

At this moment our hero's regiment reached the scene of conflagration. The miller's wife, carrying two infants in her arms, and followed by a girl about eleven years of age, was rushing from the burning pile. "Mary," cried she to her daughter, "take care of the children. I will try what I can save." So saying, she hurried back towards the mill.

"Mother, dear mother, stay with us!"

cried the little ones, piteously. It was more than Mary could do to restrain them, as they clung half wild with terror to their mother's gown.

"Let me go," cried Mary, and disappeared in the flaming building. The miller's wife waited for her return in breathless anxiety. The flames hissed and crackled, the heat waxed fiercer and more fierce, but Mary reappeared not. At length, her voice was heard, crying—"Mother, mother, I can't find the way out!"

Frantic with terror, the mother tore herself from the grasp of her little ones; but two French soldiers sprang forward and seized her arms. "Remain here," cried they. "It is useless." The girl's cries became fainter and fainter. The mother struggled like a maniac to escape from the soldiers, while the terrified children shrieked aloud.

Augustus could no longer remain a pas-

sive spectator of this scene. He left the ranks, and ran towards the mill. A French officer who stepped forward to prevent him, fell over the drum which our hero had thrown away before dashing into the mill. Hastening up the burning staircase, he dragged the half-suffocated girl from place to place, clambering over burning fragments, and once nearly crushed by a falling beam. At length he found himself with his companion in the basement story of the mill, and took refuge in a small vaulted cellar, just above the water mark, beside the great wheel. Above them the flames still raged fiercely, and every now and then burning fragments would rain down, and fall hissing into the water beneath. Through all the noise and uproar they could distinctly hear the screams of the poor miller's wife, and little Mary shouted in reply, till she could shout no longer. After a time all was still, but it was impossible for the children to leave their place of refuge, till

the heat should have abated. As yet they had only had time to exchange a few hurried words. The girl's thoughts were with her absent parents, and our hero was fully occupied in weighing the probable consequence of his leaving the ranks without leave. He had, however, observed that his little companion spoke German pretty fluently.

As soon as the attempt seemed at all possible, the children tried to extricate themselves from their uncomfortable position. In this they succeeded, and after much difficulty reached the open fields. Of the regiment not a trace was to be seen; nothing but ruined homesteads and blackened walls, in the place so lately alive with the busy hum of men;—everywhere ruin and desolation. Little Mary called aloud for her father and mother, in German and Russian—no sound was heard in reply but the crackling of charred beams in the burnt cottages. At length the poor child sat

down weeping among the ruins. Our hero, too, became more and more disquieted. He could not but feel anxious at finding himself alone in a strange land, and the longer he lingered the more alarmed did he become. At length he rose, and taking his little companion's hand, set out in search of comrades, comforting the child with the hope of soon finding her parents. Towards noon they overtook a troop of French soldiers, who, to the no small astonishment of our hero, took him prisoner as a deserter, and an hour afterwards delivered him up to his regiment, which was quartered in a little town, abandoned like Moisevka, by its inhabitants. "Be careful, comrade," said the soldiers, who were leading the boy to his trial, "your case is a bad one; you'll need all your wit to get out of the scrape."

Augustus begged his captors to take pity on the poor forsaken girl, and give her into the care of sergeant Hoyer, which they promised faithfully to do.

CHAPTER IX.

AUGUSTUS IS SHOT.

THE room into which the drummer was led for trial, was a large apartment, thronged with officers from the different regiments. Among them, Augustus recognised the colonel of his regiment, and also the Frenchman who had fallen over his drum the preceding evening. The company were laughing and chatting, as they discussed their luncheon of wheaten bread, Dutch cheese, and wine, and everybody seemed in the best possible humour. Nobody seemed to take the least notice of the lad, who was detained for some time in custody, before the corporal made his report to the colonel. The examination itself did not occupy more than ten minutes. Augustus could not deny that he had quitted the ranks without

leave, had caused a staff officer to fall over his drum, and that he had afterwards been taken prisoner as a deserter. The officer who presided at the examination declared, that to commit any one of these crimes, was more than a soldier's life was worth. "Firstly," said he, "you have broken your oath of allegiance; secondly, you have offended against the law of subordination; and thirdly, you are the first who has been guilty of a breach of discipline in the enemy's territory."

Without regard to the boy's youth, and utter inexperience, he was sentenced—to be shot. The whole affair was conducted with as much indifference as though the life of a dog or cat had been in question, and not that of a human being. This levity pained our hero the more, as he could not help contrasting the agonizing grief his parents would feel, with the total unconcern of his judges. The colonel, too, seemed no longer

the kind-hearted man he had always been. With folded arms and knitted brows, he stood apart among the rest, and purposely avoided meeting the beseeching glance of the poor culprit, who in his defence, could only plead that he had not left the ranks for any bad purpose, but on the contrary, to save the life of the Russian girl. This assertion by no means benefited him, and he was prevented from saying more, by the young lieutenant who had, on a former occasion, insulted Hoyer—

“Why, you young blockhead,” angrily interrupted this merciful man, “do you suppose we are come here to save the lives of the Russians, or to conquer and destroy them?—Besides, a soldier has no right to act for himself, but should pay blind obedience to the orders of his officers. If your own father or brother were among the enemy, your sword or bayonet should be pointed at him, just as though he were a

stranger." Augustus was horrified at the bare idea of such a thing. "I would rather be shot a hundred times," thought he, "than kill my good father, or my brother."

On being motioned to retire, he could not go, without making an appeal to the only friend he had. Hastening towards him, he seized his hand and kissed it passionately, pouring forth in a voice almost inarticulate, with emotion, a prayer that the kind colonel would make but one effort to save his young life.

The old man's face grew still more dark, as, biting his lips, he sternly replied; "I could do nothing to save you, even if I would; your crime is too great. Had you offended me personally, I might have forgiven it; but an offence committed against a French officer is never pardoned." So saying, he turned moodily away.

"Honoured colonel," continued the boy, "had it not been for you, I should have

lost my life two months ago. But my poor parents!—will you tell them that I thought of them at my last hour—that I thank them for their love and kindness to me all my life long, and”—here the boy's voice faltered—“that we shall meet again.”

The colonel nodded slightly, in token of acquiescence, turned hastily away, and swallowed a glass of wine. “Captain Warneck, you will command at the execution,”—said he.

At a sign from the French colonel, a French officer stepped forward, saying, “I will accompany you, captain!”

The party addressed replied by a formal bow, and Augustus was marched off by the sentinels. Sergeant Hoyer was waiting outside with a file of soldiers, of whom four were armed with pickaxes and shovels; a drummer, beating the dead march, led the way, and the little procession, leaving the town, entered a field outside the ramparts, where

a grave had already been dug. The soldiers stood grouped around the delinquent in moody silence. Not a voice was raised to speak a word of comfort, no kind hand was there to wipe away the perspiration, which hung in bead-like drops upon his brow—no preacher of the gospel to strengthen him for his last journey. With great difficulty Hoyer maintained his calmness; he glanced uneasily at the young culprit, whose gaze wandered wildly from one to another, and stroked his long moustache in evident indecision.

“As sure as my name’s Christopher,” muttered he,—“I must let the poor lad into the secret, or he will go mad with terror.” Then stepping forward, he said with a loud voice,—“Ten men step forward and fire when the word is given; should they miss, the other ten are to step forward and take their place. Aim at the head, comrades, and you are sure to hit.”

Now, my poor fellow," continued he, addressing Augustus, "I must lead you to your place."

These words awoke the boy from his reverie. Summoning up all his courage, he cried out—"Farewell, comrades—aim truly, and do not let me suffer long."

"Farewell!" cried they all.

Hoyer now led the delinquent to the sand heap beside the grave. On the way, he said,—"Is there anything I can do for you, my poor boy?"

"Nothing," answered Augustus, sadly—"yes, though—the Russian girl, I have paid dearly for saving her. Promise me, father Hoyer, that you will provide for her, and restore her in due time to her parents."

"That I will, if I live," replied the sergeant.

By this time they had reached the sand-heap.

"Kneel down, dear boy," said Hoyer, "and let me blindfold you." He drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and bound it round the lad's eyes, who could not suppress a shudder.

"It's no use, colonel," again muttered Hoyer, "I must tell the poor fellow, if you should chop me into mincemeat for it. You have nothing further to say?" continued he aloud, "or should you wish to repeat a short prayer?"

Our hero folded his hands, and began, with a trembling voice, to repeat the Lord's Prayer.

"How strange it is," thought Hoyer, "that all condemned criminals should ask for daily bread before they die, when it is hardly likely they will need any more: I suppose it's because they can think of no other prayer at such a moment than the one they have learnt from the cradle. Well, well, our Heavenly Father knows what we want before we ask."

When Augustus had finished his prayer, the sergeant again stepped forward, and whispered a few words in his ear, whereupon the boy began to tremble violently, and almost sank down upon the sand hill.

“Comrade, don’t be a coward!” cried the sergeant aloud. “Kneel as upright as you can, so that you don’t fall before you’re shot, and prolong your suffering.”

So saying, he turned away and rejoined his comrades, who had in the meantime loaded their muskets, at their captain’s orders. Ten men advanced to within twenty yards of our hero, and the captain gave the word—“Make ready—present—Fire!”

Bang, bang, went the muskets, and Augustus fell backwards into the grave.

Hoyer advanced quickly, took the bandage from his eyes, and, bending over the inanimate body, cried, “Well aimed, comrades,—six of the bullets have struck him!”

With the help of one of the soldiers

he proceeded to lay out the body. Captain Warneck took the arm of the French captain, who had been an attentive spectator, and they walked together towards the town. The soldiers, who had feigned to be filling up the grave with great assiduity, ceased their work as soon as the two officers were out of sight. They formed a close circle round the grave, and each man pulled out of his mouth a bullet, which he had bitten off the cartridge on loading his musket. The men laughed heartily at the thought of the trick they had played the Frenchmen.

“That’s what we call shooting a man *à la Française*,” cried one; “they taught us the trick themselves, the braggarts,—how many men they have shot who have ran away in the next battle alive and well.”

“I think the French colonel had his suspicions,” said another, “and that’s why he sent one of his men to see fair play. Well, we’ve tricked him with all his cleverness!”

The soldiers were in high glee at their successful manœuvre. Hoyer took hold of Augustus's arm, and shaking him heartily, cried out, "Comrade, it's time to get up."

But the boy could not get up, for the agitation had been too much for him—he had fainted.

"What nonsense, to take such a trifle to heart," grumbled Hoyer, pulling out his brandy-flask—"wait till you have gone through half a dozen battles, my lad, and you'll think nothing of such a freak as this." Taking the patient's head between his knees, he bathed his forehead with spirits, a proceeding which had the desired effect.

The boy opened his eyes, and stared vacantly round him. Gradually they made him understand they had fired at him with blank cartridges. This was, in fact, what Hoyer had whispered to him, but what he had not dared to believe.

With tears of joy Augustus shook each

of his comrades in turn by the hand. "But does the colonel know of this?" he asked. "He seemed to have quite given me up."

"That was only pretence, because the Frenchmen were all watching him," replied Hoyer. "Don't you see, without his consent we should not have dared to play such a trick. 'Hoyer,' said he, 'now mind you act your part well. I should never forgive myself if the poor lad were to lose his life, merely because the Frenchman's pride has been wounded.'"

"Heaven bless him for a kind gentleman!" cried the boy with enthusiasm—"I would go through fire and water for him, and for you too, father Hoyer, and for you all!" continued he, turning to the soldiers.

"Why, you've grown quite a salamander since yesterday morning," returned the sergeant, laughing. "But for the present we can't take advantage of your fire-eating

propensities, for you must leave us, and that quickly."

"Leave you!" cried Augustus, in surprise.

"Ay, my lad, that you must," replied the sergeant. "You see, if you are seen among us, the trick that has been played would be found out, and the colonel would get into a scrape. Moreover, we mustn't stay any longer palavering here, or suspicion will be excited. Here is an old blouse for you to put on over your uniform, and see, behind yon garden wall your little miller's maid is waiting for you. You can go with her to the Russians, and if you don't like remaining with them, and no opportunity occurs of returning to Germany, you can rejoin us in a little while, when to-day's business will have blown over."

Augustus could not refrain from shedding tears at parting with his comrades and the good old sergeant, whom he particularly

charged to thank the colonel a thousand times for his kindness. He then went to seek out the little Russian, whom he found waiting for him behind the garden wall, as Hoyer had said. The two companions lost no time in setting out for the ruined village, where they hoped to gain some tidings of Mary's parents.

CHAPTER X.

AUGUSTUS'S THREE COMBATS: WITH HIMSELF —WITH A WOLF—AND WITH A DOG.

ALTHOUGH the drummer's uniform was effectually concealed by the blouse provided by Hoyer, he was afraid to keep the high road, lest he should be recognised and taken prisoner a second time. He therefore led his companion along by unfrequented foot-paths, taking care, however, to keep the road in sight, and at the same time to avoid attracting the observation of the bands of soldiers who every now and then appeared in view. This deviation from the straight path, added to the delay occasioned by their stopping so frequently to hide, considerably increased the wearisomeness of their march. Augustus, for his part, was far from feeling fatigued, but every now

and then he glanced anxiously at the little girl, who was not so well inured to long marches as himself. He therefore took every opportunity of stopping to rest, and each time asked her if she felt tired. Though little Mary only shook her head in reply, her companion could plainly see that it was only the feverish excitement caused by her anxiety regarding her parents which kept her from sinking with exhaustion. The mid-day sun now poured down his beams upon them more fiercely than Augustus could have thought possible in such a country as Russia. Every time the children passed a spring or even a pond, they stopped to quench their thirst, but neither thought of eating.

At length the ruined village appeared in the distance. By this time the sun had already set, and evening was closing in. Little Mary now began to hurry forward faster than ever, and Augustus followed

more slowly, recommending her to be cautious. But caution was unnecessary, for not a trace of a human being was to be discovered. Sitting disconsolately down on the threshold of the ruined dwelling-house, poor Mary gave way to a passionate burst of grief.

Augustus seated himself beside her, and was soon absorbed in meditations of a far more pleasant kind. His thoughts were wholly and solely fixed on his beloved home, and his dear parents. Now at length he was free! The road lay open before him, and there was nothing to prevent his setting out at once. How his heart swelled at the idea.—What cared he for the fatigues of a long journey, or for his total want of money. With the prospect of home before him, he felt he could gladly beg his bread from day to day.

“Oh, father! oh, my dear mother! and you, Bertha and Robert!—How glad you

will be to see me again!" cried he, jumping up rapturously. A stifled sob from his companion recalled him to himself, and reminded him that he was not alone, and that he must not think only of himself.

A feeling of deep despondency came over him. He glanced sorrowfully at the Russian girl, who with feelings far different from his, was calling upon the names of her lost parents. The thought at once struck him, —would it be generous, would it be just and right on his part, to induce Mary to accompany him on his long and perilous journey, and to take her, perhaps for ever, from her fatherland and her friends?—On the other hand, could he leave her alone, perhaps to perish? Gradually he overcame the strong temptation, and glanced tenderly at the weeping girl.

"Don't cry, Mary," said he, cheerfully. "We will go and seek your parents. You say the villagers went away yonder. Come, we will follow in the same direction."

The cravings of hunger now began to manifest themselves pretty strongly in our hero's case. "What have you in that bundle?" inquired he, observing for the first time a parcel which lay by Mary's side.

"The man with the great moustache gave it me," replied she, drying her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Oh, Hoyer," said Augustus, stretching out his hand for the packet. As he had expected, on being opened, it was found to contain some bread and meat, besides a small flask of water, mixed with spirit. The children made a hearty meal, for youthful sorrow, though violent, is not lasting. Then they rose and left the ruined village, hoping that some of the inhabitants might be in its neighbourhood. Twilight had now deepened into night, and the stars came out one by one; still it was warm, and not very dark. Every sound, even to the chirp of the crickets in the scorched grass, seemed

bushed, and a solemn stillness reigned over all things as the children passed on.

"See," cried Augustus, suddenly, pointing to a dark object some distance ahead; "see, there sits a shepherd's dog, and where there are dogs men are sure not to be far off."

Mary looked up and caught her companion by the arm, without however appearing much alarmed. "That is a wolf, and not a dog," replied she.

"A wolf!" cried Augustus, in horror, instinctively feeling for his cutlass, which had been taken from him at his trial. "A wolf! for heaven's sake let us flee, or we are lost: perhaps he hasn't observed us yet."

Augustus's timidity seemed to affect his companion, who hurriedly replied—

"My father says, if one runs away from a wolf, he's sure to follow."

"But what are we to do? We can't stand here to be eaten up alive!"

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Augustus meets a wolf in the forest.—P. 106.

v

"There's not much fear of that," answered Mary, quietly. "My father says, a wolf will not attack any one singly, except in winter, and then only when he's very hungry; and then he'd be sure to howl, and wouldn't sit so quietly."

Augustus stood staring in consternation at the wolf, who stared at him in return. At length he could stand it no longer. "We can't stand waiting here all night," said he, attempting to swagger; "let us make a circuit, and pass him."

"But suppose he should follow us," said Mary, anxiously.

"I can bear this no longer!" cried our hero, who by this time had screwed up his courage. "Why should I be afraid of a rascally wolf, when I went through the fire yesterday, and was shot this morning? I'll teach you to stand here opening your great wide mouth at me, old Grizzly!"

So saying, he stooped down and picked

up a large stone. "Now, Mary, if he should come after us, you must run away as fast as you can. I only wish I had my cutlass."

He threw the stone with all his force. It hit the wolf full on the back, and with bristling hair the drummer awaited the result of his experiment. It was with a feeling of intense relief that he saw the dreaded animal rise slowly and slink away with its tail between its legs.

"I've taught him manners," cried Augustus, boastfully. "Only let him come again, and I'll smash his skull." Notwithstanding his vaunt, he could not avoid turning his head repeatedly, to see if the wolf were not following.

"Aha! look here!" cried he joyfully, picking up a thick cudgel which was lying in his way. "This may be of some use to us. I see the poetry in my lesson-book at home is not true, which said,

'A rabid wolf of the Russian school,
Dined on a carpenter, supped on his rule.'

Only let him come now, I'll beat such a tattoo on his hide, that he shall remember it all his life long."

When our hero's warlike courage had somewhat cooled down, he asked his companion if she could distinguish anything like a house or a village.

"No," answered Mary, with a yawn.

"Is that a wood before us?"

"Yes, I think so," replied the girl.

"It is just in our road. Perhaps a whole herd of wolves are in it. Now I don't care for one, but when it comes to —"

Bow, wow, wow! barked a great dog, as it came bounding towards them.

"Back," roared Augustus, brandishing his club; "keep your distance, or I'll smash you!"

Now whether the dog, being a Russian, did not understand German, or whether it

was that he did not feel appalled by the threat, we know not. However this may have been, he sprang forward, and dexterously avoiding a blow aimed at him, seized the end of the cudgel with his teeth. All the tugging in the world could not make him let go, but on the contrary he kept working his way up till the boy was at last obliged to drop the stick, or his hand would have been bitten. He had no sooner let go than the enemy sprang upon him and pulled him to the ground.

Augustus thought it was now all over with him, but the dog stood watching him quietly enough, showing, however, a very formidable set of teeth, when his prisoner attempted to rise.

"Pray lie still, Augustus, and he will not harm you," said Mary.

As he could do nothing else, our hero was compelled to obey. Footsteps were now heard, and a voice hailed them in Russian.

Mary answered in the same language, and in a few moments two wild-looking men, armed with guns, stood before them. On being ordered to rise, the little braggart obeyed, rubbing his head ruefully, and followed the men, who turned towards the wood. In a hollow at a little distance, they found a fire, around which a number of Russians lay grouped. All sprang up, at the arrival of the new comers. Augustus found himself surrounded by eager, inquiring, distrustful faces, and stood in the centre like a condemned criminal. Mary courageously came to his assistance and related their adventures since the preceding day; and fortunate was it for Augustus that he had a companion to interpret for him. The children now learnt that their hosts were a party lying in wait to surprise and kill any Frenchmen who might be found straying from the main body. They could give no intelligence concerning Mary's parents.

They said that the boy should be safe, if he would not again rejoin the enemy, which Mary eagerly promised in his name. Some food was now given them, and they were directed to lie down on a heap of dry leaves, over which some furs had been spread. Exhausted with the fatigues of the day, they obeyed right willingly, and were soon in a sound sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SURPRISE.

"As dwa! tritchoti!" commanded the little drummer, in broken Russian, drawing himself up to his full height. "Eyes right! attention!" continued he in German, and Mary, who marched beside him, interpreted.

"Halt!" cried Augustus.

"Stoi!" shouted Mary.

A long file of sturdy peasant-lads stood like a rock at the word of their diminutive leader. Each was provided with a drum, rudely fashioned, and covered with calf-skin, and their sturdy fists grasped drumsticks of formidable dimensions.

"Now," cried Augustus, "beat the tattoo, softly at first. Row de dow, row de dow, dow."

"I can't translate that," said Mary.

"Never mind," rejoined the drummer with a business-like air. "The lads must learn it without. Now then. Row de dow, row de dow, dow." And the hopeful pupils raised a tremendous din.

"I should like father Hoyer to see me now," said Augustus, laughing. "How he would stare to see me turned drum-major. But my pupils here shall do me credit, for I'll make capital drummers of them."

The reader, who will no doubt wonder as much as sergeant Hoyer, at finding Augustus appearing in this new character, should here be made acquainted with the children's further adventures, from the time when we left them with the Russians in the hollow. They had quitted their hosts on the following morning, and wandered from place to place, vainly hoping to obtain some tidings of Mary's parents. They were but scantily supplied with food, being obliged to subsist on the precarious charity of the

peasants. In the meantime an imperial proclamation had gone forth, and the Russians were assembling from every quarter to join the army and give battle to the enemy. The little wanderers arrived one day at a town, where our hero's birth and profession could no longer be concealed. He was cited before the authorities, who gave him his choice, either to be locked up as a prisoner of war, or to assist in the defence of the country. He chose the latter, as he was merely required to initiate the young peasants, before-mentioned, into the art and mystery of beating the drum. Comfortable quarters were assigned to him and his companion, he received regular pay, and could, as we have seen, play the commander in a small way. Mary had become quite reconciled to their new mode of life, and learned to look up to Augustus as her friend and protector.

Several weeks had glided on in this way,

when Augustus began to pine for his home. For whole nights together he would lay awake, thinking of his absent friends. Besides this he did not at all like the Russian mode of living. Hardly a day passed on which he did not see several cudgellings given and received, and even the officers sometimes got their ears boxed by the colonels. Augustus sometimes trembled for his own back, though as yet he had got on very well. One night he had lain awake for some hours, thinking, as usual, of his home, and at length fell into a dose, and began to dream that he had returned to his native town. A peace was being proclaimed, and the town bells were ringing and cannons firing. The noise seemed to grow louder and louder, till all the windows rattled again. A bright light flashed up. He gradually became conscious of a child's voice shouting in his ear—he started and awoke.

Little Mary was standing by his bedside, crying with fright, and tugging at him with

might and main. The room was lighted up with so bright a glare, that a pin might have been seen on the floor. In the street below were heard furious voices, mingled with groans and shrieks. Musket-balls came crashing through the windows, and buried themselves in the walls. The houses on the opposite side were in flames.

“Oh, Augustus, Augustus, how frightened I am!” wept Mary. “The enemy have come at last.”

Augustus, who was still half asleep, rubbed his eyes and stared in surprise, now at the weeping girl, and now at the burning houses.

“Stoop, stoop down!” cried Mary, pulling him back, as a fresh volley came crashing into the room.

“Why, those are our people!” cried Augustus, gleefully, “that is my regiment! Hoyer, Hoyer, here am I!” and taking his companion’s hand he ran down stairs.

As the children opened the door which led

into the street, a private of Augustus's company rushed towards them.

"Hail, comrade!" cried Augustus. But the comrade could neither see nor hear from excess of rage. The expression of his countenance was so terrible, that Mary was quite terrified at him, and pulled Augustus back into the passage with such force that both fell down. This was lucky for them, as the soldier would probably have run one of them through with his bayonet. In a little while Mary ventured to open the door once more, and Augustus recognised the colonel, on horseback, at the head of his men.

"Colonel, honoured colonel!" cried Augustus, running out into the road. But the colonel turned to his followers, and cried,—

"Forward, lads, forward! Hew down whatever opposes you! Spare none; give no quarter! Forward, forward!"

"How the kind man must have changed," said our hero, sorrowfully, as he once more

retired into the house, deeming it most prudent to keep out of the way. "I must have altered very much; or perhaps my comrades think I left them on my own accord. I wonder what Hoyer would have done."

The words were hardly uttered, when the house-door was flung open, and in marched the sergeant, followed by several of his men.

"Hoyer! father Hoyer!" shouted the boy. Hoyer raised his musket to strike; but Augustus quickly added, "I am Augustus Wunsch, your drummer. Don't you know me?"

"By the powers of war!" cried the sergeant. "How came you here? I didn't know you at all."

"Indeed, you all seem dreadfully changed since I left you," said Augustus, ruefully. "Private Stiesel, of our company, wanted to run me through with his bayonet—the colonel told them to give me no quarter, and you, father Hoyer—"

“Ha, ha, ha,” laughed the sergeant—
“It’s plain enough that you are a novice in the noble art of war. As for us, we are the same men as we were before, and what makes you wonder so much, is only the rage of war. When that seizes us we neither see nor hear. In the fight we clear away everything that crosses our path, and doesn’t wear our uniform. If our father or brother were there, we shouldn’t know him, and often we can’t stop to notice whether people wear trowsers or petticoats. On we go, blindfold—cut and thrust—the more the merrier!”

“But what in the world has put you all into such a rage?” inquired Augustus.
“Nobody knew that you were near, and last night every one went quietly to bed.”

“Just so,” cried Hoyer, laughing. “And we surprised them in their beds, and burnt their houses for them, lest they should catch cold.”

“Poor creatures!” said the young drummer, with a sigh. “They have treated me kindly enough, and never in their lives injured any of you.”

“That’s true enough,” replied the sergeant — “but, you see, this is time of war.”

“But why must war be?” urged Augustus. “Here we’ve marched hundreds of miles away to kill people whom we have never seen in our lives, and—”

“Hold your tongue, boy!” interrupted his hearer, angrily. “Don’t grumble—a soldier must obey and not murmur. Napoleon has said: ‘It is *war*—the Russians are your enemies;’ and so every good soldier must fall upon them without mercy. If the Emperor were to-morrow to give the word,—‘*Peace*—sheathe your swords’—why then we’ll cry, ‘Hurrah! brother Russian—hail comrade, well met!’ ”

“I always thought,” observed Augustus,

"that love and hatred could not be commanded by any one."

"Napoleon can do everything,"—was the answer. "There isn't another man in the world like him. A few words from his lips do more work than a hundred cannons. And who knows," continued the sergeant, as he drew himself proudly up,—“who knows, but that I may some day earn a bit of ribbon, with a white cross at the end.”

"A bit of ribbon and a cross?" inquired Augustus, wondering.

"Bah! you're a stupid boy,"—cried Hoyer, angrily. "And here am I listening to your prate, whilst my people up stairs are packing up everything that's worth taking. I must go and look after my share," and he turned towards the stair.

"Father Hoyer!" cried the boy after him.

"What now?" answered Hoyer, looking back.

"I always took you for an honest man."

"Thunder and lightning! who says I'm not?"

"But you're going to steal other people's property."

"Harkee, youngster, don't presume on my good nature—and choose your words better. Plundering isn't stealing, and is always the custom in time of war!" roared the sergeant, as he ran up-stairs.

"I see now," muttered Augustus, "that war is a cloak for everything that's bad."

The soldiers now came tramping down-stairs, laden with booty. Whatever they could not use, or carry away with them, was wantonly destroyed. Provisions, clothing, linen, candles, soap, and household furniture lay heaped pell-mell in the street. Augustus looked at the devastation with a sigh, and with a heavy heart prepared to follow his comrades, who were about to quit the town, and rejoin the main body of the army.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BATTLE.

OUR hero now resumed his place in his regiment. The colonel welcomed him kindly, as did also his comrades. Through Hoyer's influence, Mary was entrusted to the care of a sutler woman, and could either walk or ride at pleasure; but she liked best to walk beside her old companion, whenever this could be done. Augustus soon observed, to his great astonishment, that the regiment was reduced to little more than half its former number. He ran to sergeant Hoyer, and asked the reason.

"Why, boy," said the sergeant—"it was perhaps lucky for you that you were shot in sport, and had to leave us, or you might have been shot in earnest. For they made

us storm a rascally old fortress—Smolensk, they called it—and many of our poor fellows didn't see the sun rise next morning.—Six of our drummers were killed, and you might have been in the black list.”

A few days afterwards, a report was spread abroad, that the Russian army was on its march, and that a decisive battle must soon be fought. Strange as it may appear, the news was hailed with universal joy. The soldiers were all heartily tired of the long and wearisome marches, so that they rejoiced in the prospect of any change, even though it should cost the lives of thousands. The different portions of the army were now brought together, and the station of each regiment was fixed. The army was spread out something in the form of a gigantic bird. In the centre, strengthened by innumerable cannon, were posted the best regiments, and the enormous wings were to surround and hem in the enemy.

A large body of reserve stood ready to support the army in case of need.

It was on the 4th of September, 1812, that towards evening the booming of cannon announced the commencement of the battle. The earth seemed to shake and tremble to the dreadful din. Augustus, who had never heard cannons firing so near him, became red and pale by turns. The soldiers, however, sat round him quite unconcerned, talking, laughing, and eating, as though the firing did not disturb them in the least. This strange indifference increased the boy's alarm;—he took refuge with Hoyer, who soon observed that all was not right with the drummer.

“This firing does not concern us,” said he. “It is on the left wing. But the enemy's great redoubt will cost a great many lives, for we must have it at any price, and the village of Borodino too.”

“And what then?”

"Why, then"—continued Hoyer—"there will be nothing to hinder us from entering Moscow."

"And what then?" again asked Augustus.

"Then peace will be made, and we shall return home."

"But we had peace already, before the war began. Why must we all march so many hundreds of miles, and kill so many people, to gain what we had already at home."

"Bah! you don't understand me at all," said Hoyer. "It was destined that there should be war, and the great comet didn't appear in the sky last year for nothing."

"But I thought Napoleon began the war, and not the comet?"

"Well, so he did, boy!—I am saying that the comet predicted it was Heaven's will that there should be a war."

"Why, the comet can't speak," insisted Augustus; "how can it predict a war?"

“What nonsense!—They prophesied last year there would be a war.”

“*Who* prophesied? Not the comet, but, after all, only men, who practise on our superstition.”

“I tell you, you’re a fool,” said Hoyer, turning angrily away.

“I still keep to my opinion,” muttered the youngster. “They lay the blame of their own evil doings on the poor comet, to appear better in the eyes of men.”

At length the cannonade ceased, and, as far as the eye could reach, innumerable watch-fires flashed up. The soldiers lay grouped around, but suspense kept most of them on the alert. As the night wore on, however, many a soldier, spent with fatigue and watching, closed his eyes to enjoy a short slumber, perhaps for the last time on earth. The watch-fires went out one by one, and deeper grew the silence, broken only at intervals by the challenge of a sen-

try, or the neighing of a horse. But when the first faint glimmer of light in the east announced the coming of the eventful day, every one was up and stirring. The piled muskets were appropriated, each by its owner, and the whole army was drawn up. The colonels walked up and down the ranks of their respective regiments, exhorting the men to faithfulness and duty; the sergeants read out the lists of their companies, and the word "Stand at ease!" was given. And now the golden sunlight came streaming over the fields, to look on carnage and desolation instead of blessing and plenty. That day no lark carolled forth its glad hymn of praise in the blue sky; the birds had all fled from the sound of the cannon, which was heard booming at intervals through the morning mist. As the armies stood waiting in expectation of the word to begin the fight, the order was given to throw up mounds of earth or redoubts,

and before night the whole plain was covered with long banks of earth and deep trenches.

The second night passed quietly away, but on the third morning, at sunrise, a dreadful carnage began. Twelve hundred pieces of heavy artillery vomited forth flames and death, reddening the heavens with their glare. Every now and then a messenger of death would fly whizzing past Augustus's regiment, who stood motionless leaning on their muskets. The young drummer himself felt very uncomfortable, his sinews seemed all unstrung, so that his knees knocked powerlessly together. The young lieutenant, of whom we have already made mention, seemed in the same predicament. With trembling hands he lifted his spirit-flask to his parched lips;—the soldiers were not slow in observing these indications of cowardice.

“ Our downy-bearded lieutenant has

the cannon fever," whispered they one to another.

It was in truth a most disagreeable fever with which most of the novices were seized. One after another the regiments advanced to the attack; now the regiment in front of our hero's had moved from its place, and it would be his turn next. The officers buckled their belts tighter, the privates lifted their knapsacks a few inches higher, and all waited breathlessly for the word of command. This was given. With all the power of his deep voice the colonel cried, "Attention!—fix bayonets!—quick march!—forward!"

The band struck up an inspiring air, the tones of which were however inaudible except to those who stood nearest. The pace at which they advanced increased every moment in celerity. Not one of the soldiers could discern the goal towards which they were hastening; the only things

they could see were the long dark lines of the regiments before them, in whose ranks large gaps continually appeared, which were presently filled up. The thick cloud of smoke barred all further prospect. Suddenly the word was given,—“Double quick time!”

The music was stopped, and our hero's duty commenced. He had to run behind the company to which he belonged, beating his drum at every step. Suddenly a tremendous volley came ploughing through the ranks. Augustus stumbled over something, and fell to the ground. On scrambling up again, he saw the whole space around strewn with dead bodies and dying men. The regiment seemed completely broken up.

“Close your ranks!” thundered the colonel. “Forward, lads!”

The thinned ranks formed again, and rushed on, over the bodies of their fellow comrades.

A puff of wind now for an instant blew away the smoke, and Augustus saw, at some distance ahead, a large redoubt, on which the Russian artillerymen were reloading their cannons. In another minute countless streams of fire poured forth. There was a roar, as though the vault of Heaven were rent asunder, and once more the boy was thrown to the ground. This time he found it impossible to rise, for he was pressed almost to suffocation by the bodies of several soldiers who had fallen over him. His senses deserted him, and he fainted.

A fresh discharge of cannon aroused him from his stupor, but with all his struggling he could not shake off the weight that encumbered him, and was soon forced, from sheer exhaustion, to lie quietly. Whether he was wounded, and if so, where, he could not make out.

As he renewed his endeavours to push away the dead bodies above him, he heard

a strange noise, which increased every moment. The earth seemed to vibrate, and a certain rushing sound, unlike the noise of thunder or of cannon, came nearer and nearer. It resembled the pattering of a hail-storm, mingled with the rattling of ten thousand chains. In another minute he felt himself crushed by something passing over the dead bodies beneath which he lay. The pain of the concussion once more took away his senses.

The regiments of Saxon cavalry, guards, and cuirassiers were dashing across the field, towards the great redoubt. Once more did the enemy's cannons deal slaughter among the assailants, and then they were hushed. The redoubt was taken — the battle won.

For a long time Augustus lay without sense or motion, till a pull at his arm at length brought him to himself. A French soldier was standing over him, endeavouring to pull off his coat. On the drummer's

asking the reason of this proceeding, the man sulkily answered,—“That he had thought him dead, and had constituted himself his heir.” And so saying he turned away and began plundering one of the dead bodies which lay around.

Augustus got up, and gazed in horror at the scene of blood. The corpses lay piled around, not singly, but in heaps. Many were already stripped of their clothes, and nearly all horribly mutilated by wounds and the marks of horses' feet. He himself had had a narrow escape, for if the dead bodies of his comrades had not prevented his feeling the full weight of the horses that passed over them, he must assuredly have been trampled to death.

At a little distance lay the colonel's horse, stark and stiff, but the colonel was nowhere to be seen. Sick with horror, the boy staggered towards the place where his regiment had stood; there lay the great drum, shattered by a cannon ball, marking the place

where the musicians had stood. By degrees his memory came back. Great Heaven!—now he could remember—yes, distinctly remember, that little Mary had crept to his side in the early part of the day—what had become of her when they were ordered to advance, he could not tell.

“Mary!—Dear Mary!”—cried he. “Unhappy child, where are you—why did you not stay where you were safe?” The poor boy wandered about for more than an hour, calling her name.

Suddenly the lid of an overturned powder wagon opened, and Mary herself crept forth, sound in life and limb, but with her face swollen with weeping. The children embraced each other in a transport of thankful joy. They were now no longer alone, and horrible as was the scene which surrounded them, they felt almost light-hearted.

Mary briefly explained that she had run beside Augustus till she was separated from

him by the crowd,—that she had been dreadfully frightened at the roar of the cannons, and had crawled into the overturned wagon for safety, nor dared to venture forth till she heard her preserver's voice.

Hand in hand they wandered towards the great redoubt, which had cost such thousands of lives; by climbing to the top they hoped to discover any of their comrades, who might be near.

“I wonder why they were so bent upon taking that thing,” said Augustus, thoughtfully;—“perhaps the Russians had hidden great treasures or other things of importance in it.”

The mound was so covered with dead bodies, that they could scarcely gain the summit. The blood ran down literally in streams, and fragments of bodies, arms, legs, and heads lay scattered around in ghastly profusion.

In the entrenchment itself nothing was

to be seen but earth, heaps of corpses, broken cannon wheels, and wounded men. The latter presented a piteous spectacle. One of them, a Russian officer, whose head had been fearfully gashed, was stammering out some words in a faint voice.

“What does the poor man say?” inquired Augustus, compassionately.

“He is begging in the name of Heaven for a drink of water,” answered Mary, sobbing.

Looking round, in search of the means to fulfil this prayer, Augustus descried two French soldiers standing by a wounded man. “Perhaps,” thought he, “they have a drink of water in their flasks.” But on approaching them, what a sight did he behold! A Russian, with shattered arm and wounded foot, was sitting on the ground. The Frenchmen were employed in tearing off his uniform, regardless of the agonized groans of the sufferer, on whom they were inflicting the most exquisite torture. “And

all for the sake of a miserable coat!"—thought the boy, turning away in sickening disgust.

A few paces off, a greyheaded Russian, mortally wounded, leant against a bank of earth;—a broad white line on his forehead told of approaching dissolution, but his hands were folded in devotion, and with his glazing eyes turned towards heaven, he prayed loud and fervently.

"See, Mary," said Augustus, with emotion, "how piously yonder soldier is praying.—No doubt he is commending his soul to God's mercy."

"No, indeed," replied Mary, shuddering; "he is cursing the enemies of his country, and praying heaven to grant a full and deep revenge."

"Oh, how glad I am," cried Augustus, "that these curses cannot fall upon me. If I had my will, there should be no more war—and I could never forgive myself, if a man lost his life by my means."

As the children turned to quit the scene of carnage, they became aware of a number of horsemen, splendidly mounted and accoutred, who were riding slowly towards them. Napoleon was coming with his staff to view the field of battle. With a face cold and passionless as marble he rode among the wounded, the dying, and the dead. Not a glance betrayed emotion or pity for the thousands who lay groaning and blaspheming in their agony about him.

"A noble victory!" cried one of the generals. "The redoubt and the village yonder were bravely defended, before they were taken. Fifty thousand dead and wounded men lie stretched on the plain."

"Fifty thousand men for a mound of earth and a ruined village," thought Augustus. "What a price!"

"There is now nothing to hinder us from entering the imperial Moscow," continued the general. "Long live the Emperor!"

“Long live the Emperor!” echoed the whole staff.

But the old Russian, with the white line on his forehead, seized a musket;—a French general, observing this, cut him down with his sabre, and the Emperor and his staff rode away.

And the day waned, and night came on. But the moon hid herself behind dark clouds, as though she could not bear to look down with her pure soft light upon the earth, which had drunk so deeply of its children’s blood. Thousands of dying men lay groaning in the still midnight, and praying for death as a release from their burning torment. And the pale scythe bearer descended, and quenched one life after another, as candles are extinguished when the midnight mass is said. Then the weary eyes closed, the cold limbs stretched themselves, and the wounds ceased to bleed. But many there were who tried hard to die, and could not; whose life clung to them

like fetters of iron. Deaf to their groans, death passed them by, and would not release them for many days.

On the great redoubt, friend and foe lay bedded together like brothers. Some were even sitting erect, leaning against the high breastwork, and looking down upon the battle field like living men. The sun and the rain bleached their bones, and innumerable skeletons bore witness to the greatness of the conqueror, and to the glorious victory he had won.

But the mothers who had tended these men from their childhood upwards, with deep unwearied affection, and who were awaiting their return with anxiety darkening into despair, cried woe upon the conqueror. The spirits of those murdered men were gathered to the hundreds of thousands who had been sacrificed at the shrine of his ambition, to witness against him at the last day.

CHAPTER XIII.

MOSCOW.—WILFUL WASTE.

Moscow, the rich prize of the conqueror, lay with its ancient palaces and churches before the eyes of the French army. The gilded turrets of the Kremlin flashed in the sun's rays, gladdening the hearts of the victorious invaders with the prospect of a rich booty. The city was entered without opposition.

Napoleon's expectations, however, were doomed to remain unfulfilled. Here no deputation came forth to meet him with obeisance and obsequious humility. No mob was here to gaze in awe and admiration at his splendid array. The town seemed as if stricken with the plague, so silent and dreary were the streets.

Strange to say, the man who affected to

treat with scorn the homage of crowds, felt much annoyed now that this homage was wanting. He rode gloomily through the deserted streets, and fixed his head quarters in the Kremlin. The soldiers, on the other hand, rejoiced greatly when they found so many splendid houses empty. They took possession of suites of apartments furnished for the use of princes. They amused themselves by lying with their dirty boots on the silken sofas, and slept on couches of down under gilded canopies. The finest porcelain of Sèvres and Dresden supplied the place of their earthen dishes. Cellars and storehouses were broken open, and the costliest wines flowed in streams. Chests of drawers were rummaged through, and the finest linen, shawls, and luxuries of every kind purloined. When night came on, the soldiers would light whole bundles of torches and candles, and carry them about in the magazines, reckless as to whether

combustible materials were stored up there or not. The natural consequence of this carelessness was, that several conflagrations took place, in addition to those which, it was even then rumoured, were intentionally caused by the Russians. Nobody thought of quenching the flames. On the contrary, the soldiers looked on with malicious pleasure, to see the enemy's property burn. General and common soldier—all acted alike. But a heavy punishment was in store for them.

Among the wooden houses of Moscow, the fire spread with fearful rapidity. Still the impending calamity might have been avoided, had the soldiers been less intent on plundering, and exerted themselves to stop its ravages. But no one thought of such a thing. In their foolhardy security the deluded men were already counting on new victories and fresh conquests.

It was on one of these fearful days, that

a coach with three horses, harnessed abreast, in the Russian fashion, stood at the door of a house. Presently several soldiers of the Rhenish corps appeared, carrying a wounded officer, whom they laid gently in the carriage, under the superintendence of a surgeon. A little girl took her seat beside him, and a soldier with his arm in a sling and his head bandaged up, was assisted on to the box.

"But will the colonel be able to bear the journey?" anxiously inquired a youngster in a drummer's uniform, who was no other than our friend Augustus.

"Never fear, my lad," answered the surgeon. "The colonel can do no good here; and even when he gets well, he can never take the field again. It is best for him to return to his home, where he can be properly attended to."

"Farewell, Mary!" said Augustus, turning to the girl. "Take good care of our

honoured colonel, and do all you can to lighten the journey for him. I shall see you again when you have returned to your parents, who have no doubt rebuilt their mill by this time. Farewell, then, till we meet again."

The tears stood in the boy's eyes, as she leant forward to kiss him.

"Alas, Hoyer, I am very sad," said he, turning to the soldier on the coach-box. "All who were fond of me—you, the colonel, and Mary—are going away.—How is all this to end? The lieutenant is not kind, and that bad man, Döhnert, who murdered little Emily, has rejoined the regiment. He bears me a grudge, and is only waiting till you are gone, to wreak his spite upon me.

"Don't grumble, my lad," answered the sergeant, looking down from his high seat. "It's sinful to grumble. For haven't you as yet escaped better than any of us, without a scar or a scratch? I'd change with you

in a minute.—I shouldn't so much mind this gash in my head, but I've lost three fingers, which makes a helpless cripple of me. Well, good-bye, till we meet again." And the sergeant held out his left hand, which Augustus shook, heartily. As the carriage rolled slowly away, he walked beside it for a short distance.

"That's my reward!" muttered poor Hoyer, looking ruefully at his wounded hand. "Yes, yes—the horse that earns the corn, doesn't always get it to eat. I made quite sure I should get the cross of the Legion of Honour, and I always stood like a rock when we faced the enemy. But who have got it instead of me?—A parcel of cowards, who turn pale when a bullet whistles past them, and in the battle would be glad to hide in a ditch, if they dared, rather than endanger their valuable lives."

Augustus thought he would gladly give up all the crosses in the world, if he were

once more at home. With tearful eyes he stood gazing after the carriage, long after it had vanished.

Moscow looked like a large fair, where heaps of valuables are exposed. Costly mirrors, curtains, furniture of all sorts, chests, tubs, bales of goods, and a hundred other articles, had been dragged out of the burning houses, and lay heaped pell-mell in the streets; one after the other they fell a prey to the hungry flames.

For a long time the soldiers looked on all this with great indifference, and took no thought for the future. At length, however, the fire reached such a pitch, that they were obliged to provide for their own safety. There were but few houses left, so that they had to live inconveniently crowded, and even the most reckless began anxiously to hope for the termination of the campaign. But week after week passed, and nothing was done. In the midst of

their glittering treasures they now began to experience a want of provisions, which they had till now so shamefully wasted. All the country had been exhausted—all the villages around lay in ashes, and no peasants appeared with fresh supplies, so that Napoleon was at length compelled to give the order to retreat. This was, however, a bad alternative, as the troops must needs return by the same road they had already traversed, and had but little prospect of food or shelter. To increase their troubles, autumn had set in earlier than usual, and with uncommon severity.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RETREAT.—WOFUL WANT.

THE keen wind of autumn had stripped the trees, and hardened the ground with its chilling breath. The sky was obscured by dark clouds, and a thick driving snow began to fall, which in a short time covered everything with a stiff icy rind. As far as the eye could reach the French legions appeared on the plain. They had quitted Moscow laden with booty, but the wonted hilarity no longer reigned in their ranks. They marched on, silent and gloomy, but every now and then an impatient curse would escape their lips, when they encountered fresh difficulties. Their countenances were pale, and wore an expression of suffering and distrust. They were still the same troops who, but a few short months before,

had astonished and delighted the beholder; but the splendour of their appearance was gone, and had given place to a motley diversity of costumes. Instead of their gilded helmets, many now wore low unsightly fur caps, and others had wrapped shawls or costly hangings round their head and shoulders. The cloaks were full of rents and burns, and the uniforms soiled and dirty. The horses of the cavalry were mere skeletons, panting under a burden which, in their emaciated condition, they could scarcely support. Another cause of suffering lay in the penetrating dampness of the snow, which loosened the stitches of the soldiers' boots, so that they hung in tatters round their feet, and the majority of the army had to march barefoot.

The inspiring music and the glad sound of the trumpets were heard no longer. Twelve weary horses tugged, panting, at one cannon, and could hardly be urged, even

by incessant flogging, to anything like speed. When noon arrived there was no welcome farm-house, no warm fire, no nourishing meat to throw wastefully away. How glad would those hungry men now have been, could they have procured rye loaves half as good as those they had formerly despised. They might be seen eagerly searching their knapsacks for something eatable, or greedily gnawing a frozen crust, or a tough piece of horseflesh. If any of them ventured to leave the main body in the hope of finding provisions, they were almost certain not to return, for bands of enraged peasantry, and parties of mounted Cossacks lay in wait for such stragglers, and put them to death without mercy. Many and anxious were the glances cast every evening at the setting sun, for numbers perished during the long dreary nights. If a soldier stumbled in the dim twilight, and fell to the ground, no comrade stretched out a helping hand to raise

him. They all marched callously by the fallen wretch, who was soon buried under the drifting snow, and passed unconsciously from the scene of his troubles. Later comers would stumble over the corpses, and with greedy hands open their knapsacks, to see if they contained gold or silver. When this was the case, they were carried away, but the increased burthen generally proved fatal to the bearer.—The cold increased daily, and the misery grew more and more fearful. When, after a march of many days, a town was at length reached, nothing but ruins appeared. The houses had neither doors nor windows, and all the stored-up provisions had been wantonly wasted by the French themselves, during their march towards Moscow. How bitterly did the miserable men repent of their wastefulness, when at night they sank down exhausted on the snow, and a few of the heartiest went to collect fire-wood, which had frequently to

be brought from some distance. When a fire was kindled, the half-frozen men would cluster round it like flies, with their swelled feet turned towards the flame; stretched upon the ground they would gradually approach nearer and nearer to the grateful warmth, unconscious that their clothes were singeing, and their numbed feet scorching in the fire. A leaden sleep then fell upon them; the snow fell hissing into the fire, which was gradually extinguished, and with it the life of many a soldier. When the drummer gave the signal for departure next morning, it frequently happened that scarcely one man rose from among the stiffened corpses, to obey the summons.

The horses, which rarely ever passed the night in a warm stable, or received any sustenance beyond a little musty hay, lost all their remaining strength, and fell down by hundreds. In a single night six thousand of them died. All the cavalry had

now to march on foot, as the remaining horses hardly sufficed to drag the cannon and ammunition wagons.

Then it was plainly seen how weak and short-sighted is man. The half a million of warriors, by whose aid Napoleon had intended to overcome the world, were scattered like a snow-drift by the icy breath of winter; and their commander was not able to lessen the cold one degree, or to provide the starving men with food for a single day. All thoughts of obedience, discipline, or order, vanished in the universal distress. The men marched on or halted to rest whenever they chose, so that the army resembled a confused many-coloured mass. The road was everywhere blocked up with wagons, cannon, and bodies of men and horses.—Tens of thousands were already dead and gone, and Augustus still lived. He lived, was in tolerable health, and had as yet seldom suffered hunger. Under Heaven, he had to thank Mary for this; before leaving

Moscow, she had given him some valuable advice regarding the climate of Russia. Amongst other precautions, he had provided himself with strong boots, covered with a kind of varnish composed chiefly of pitch, and with a good stock of warm clothing. In his knapsack he had stowed away a few pounds of chocolate, as provision for time of need. His youth, added to his modesty and readiness to oblige, often procured him food while others were obliged to suffer hunger. As he marched stoutly on, his healthy appearance created not a little envy among the handful of men to which his regiment was now reduced; and Döhnert, the drummer, more especially looked upon him with no friendly eye, on account of the well-deserved chastisement he had received from Augustus's father. Fortunate was it for the boy that Döhnert's strength and spirit had been broken by hunger and cold, or it might have fared hard with him.

They had now passed the ruined fortress

of Smolensk, and halted one evening, to bivouac as usual, in the open air. Augustus, as the strongest, was sent out to collect firewood, and had soon kindled a blazing fire, round which the soldiers sat cooking dry pieces of horseflesh. Augustus had still the greater portion of his chocolate remaining, and had for several days purposed making some of it into a strengthening drink. But this must be done secretly, for if the others saw what he had, they would have taken it from him. He therefore waited till all were asleep, and then putting an earthen pipkin full of snow to the fire, was soon busily employed at his cookery. It was just ready, when to his great vexation, Döhnert the drummer suddenly turned round.

“Ah!” cried he, “that smells deliciously—what, chocolate! Let’s see, my boy.”

Augustus could have cried with rage when he saw the rascal rise and stagger

towards him. "Comrade," said he, at last, "I'm contented to share with you, though I've little enough for myself."

"What's that about sharing?" cried the drummer angrily, "I'll share with nobody. Give me the pipkin; give it here, I say!" and stretching forward, he seized it with both hands, and began greedily to swallow the boiling liquid.

The boy looked on with indignant eyes. Of all men, Döhnert was the last whom he would have wished to share with,—and to rob him outright was too bad. He felt strong enough to hurl the emaciated wretch who sat crouching before him into the fire, and involuntarily raised his hand to give him a violent push; but it was only a momentary impulse. "It is better to suffer wrong than to do it," thought he, and turning away, threw himself down beside his companions, using his knapsack as a pillow. Still he could not refrain from

shedding a few tears as he lay awake, cold and hungry. Sleep came, however, in a few hours; but on waking the next morning he found himself without his knapsack, and alone. He could tell by the manner in which the snow lay heaped around him, that somebody had piled it up thus, to hinder his comrades from seeing him. This could be no other than the thief of the chocolate and the knapsack, namely, Döhnert. Augustus rose and looked around him. Several corpses lay near, frozen stark and stiff, but not a living creature was to be seen. Full of mournful forebodings he set out to overtake his comrades, and after a few hours' marching, arrived at a village which seemed familiar to him. Yes—surely—there were the ruins among which he and Mary had wandered, and yonder heap of stones was all that remained of the mill. Every morsel of woodwork had been burnt for fuel by the retreating army. Several

traces of newly extinguished fires, and other more mournful mementos in the shape of numerous dead bodies, showed that a portion of the French army had bivouacked here on the preceding night. But how completely was Augustus deceived in his expectations! He had hoped to find the village, or at least the mill rebuilt, and that he should see Mary and her parents, who would welcome him joyfully. And now hunger, that importunate creditor, knocked loudly to be satisfied. After vainly searching all his pockets for a crust, he looked eagerly round to discover something eatable. The swollen carcase of a horse, from which large strips of flesh had been cut, lay at a little distance; but hungry as the lad was, he could not bring himself to eat of such food. "Perhaps I shall find something in one of the knapsacks which are lying about," said he, taking up one. But it was in vain that he opened one after

another; in some he found gold, and in others silver, but not a scrap of food. A wagon with broken wheels lay in a hollow on the margin of the stream; round it were scattered several broken barrels, and also some smaller ones, which had sustained no damage, and felt very heavy.

“Gold, and nothing but gold,” sighed Augustus, when with infinite labour he had succeeded in breaking open one of the little barrels. “Oh, that they contained biscuit or flour!” thought he, as he turned away to continue his search.

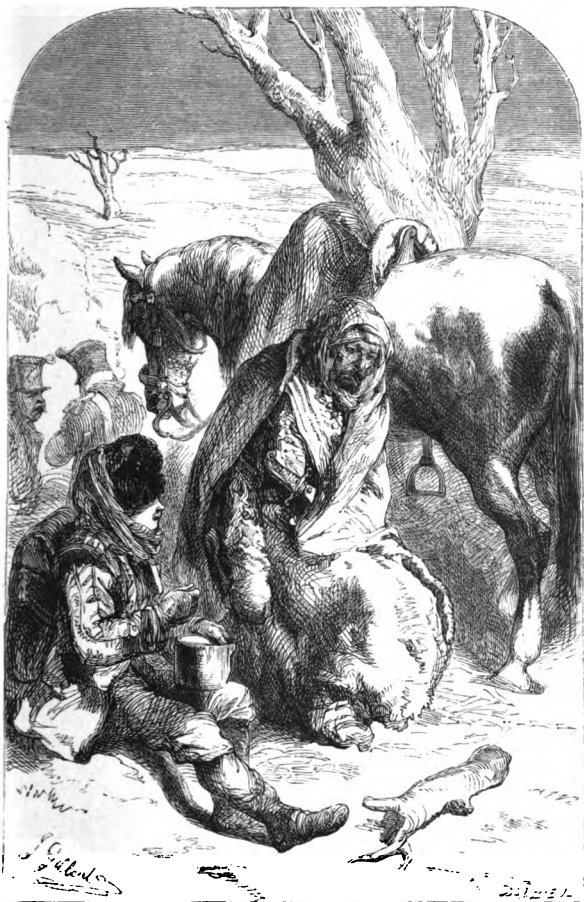
A little carriage, harnessed to which was a miserable horse that had fallen down dead, now drew his attention. The snow had driven in at the open door, covering all the inside with a thick icy coating. A few wretched coverlets were frozen so stiffly that Augustus was obliged to use his knife to sever them, and what was his horror to find that the occupants, a young woman

and an infant, were quite dead. They were past all pain, and had slumbered tranquilly away into a world of blissful rest.

Accustomed as our hero had of late become to scenes of death and misery, there was something so exquisitely pathetic in the expression of the little pale face, sleeping so peacefully in its mother's arms, that he felt quite unmanned, and sat down weeping bitterly. Hunger, however, compelled him to prosecute his search, and this time he was successful. In one corner of the carriage he discovered a large bag, which, on being opened, proved to contain a mixture of barley-meal and rye. A tin can was also found, and by melting some snow, and boiling the grain therein, he produced a dish which, in his famished state, appeared to him the most delicious he had ever tasted. When he had satisfied his hunger, Augustus proceeded to put some of the gold pieces he had found into his pockets, taking care,

however, that it should not be enough to impede his progress. A happy thought now struck him. He remembered the subterranean chamber in the mill, into which he had crept with Mary on the night of the fire, and proceeded to deposit there all the little barrels, and all the knapsacks which contained money. "That will be more than enough to rebuild the mill,"—said he, cheerfully, as he placed his great treasure, the bag of meal, in an empty knapsack, before continuing his march. In the evening he overtook some French soldiers, who were bivouacking near a thicket. Straying among the ranks, in the hope of finding some of his countrymen, he was accosted in French by a weak voice, and looking up, beheld an officer, strangely attired, sitting beside his horse. The lower part of his body was covered by a thick furred petticoat, over which he wore a military coat, gorgeously embroidered, but dirty and

Augustus bivouacks with his strange guest.—P. 164.



Augustus bivouacks with his strange guest.—P. 164.

ragged. Over his shoulders he had thrown a horsecloth; he wore on his head a thick handkerchief, twisted like a turban, and haybands were wound round the remains of what had once been boots. He leant with his head against the body of the horse.

“Comrade,” said this strange apparition, “have you nothing to eat?—I only beg for a few mouthfuls.”

Augustus stood still, debating with himself whether he should grant the stranger’s request. “Has not heaven this very day given me ample provision?” said he, to himself,—“and we are told in the Bible to do good to all men.”

“Have patience for a few minutes,” said he, aloud. “I will go and kindle a fire.”

So saying, he ran off to cut down a number of pine branches in the adjoining thicket, and proceeded to light his fire. This was, however, a task of no little difficulty, for the branches were covered with

frozen snow, and quite wet. After many fruitless attempts, he at length got them to burn. The next thing was to fill the can with snow, and put it on the fire to melt; but it had to be replenished several times, before water enough was produced. When the water boiled, the drummer shook in some of the barley and rye, and stirred it round and round.

“But I have neither salt nor suet,” said he to his guest, who sat with his hungry eyes fixed upon the steaming can.

The Frenchman put his hand into the pocket of his uniform, and brought forth a small parcel. “There, comrade,” replied he,—“there is suet.”

On opening the paper, a piece of tallow candle appeared, which was immediately popped into the soup, and stewed down. The Frenchman now handed another paper to his host, saying—“Here, comrade, is salt.”

This time a cartridge of gunpowder came to light, which was also added to the frugal dish. Augustus now handed the produce of his cookery to his guest, together with a spoon he had cut out of a piece of bark. The Frenchman ate six spoonfuls with an appearance of great relish, and then Augustus's turn came. But while the guest was eating, the firelight streamed full upon him, and Augustus recognised the countenance of the colonel by whose means he had so nearly been shot. The Frenchman had in the mean time risen to the rank of general, and had not the least idea that his present benefactor was the wretched drummer, whom he had long numbered among the dead. It was with a feeling of intense pleasure that Augustus saw his unconscious enemy regaling at his cost, and so absorbed was he with his discovery, that he had almost forgotten the business in hand, till the general held out the spoon towards him,

and said—"Eat, comrade—it's good, very good."

They ate on in turn, and between them the mess soon vanished. When they had finished, the general advised his companion to lean his head against the horse for warmth, and try to sleep. Augustus was about to obey, when the cry arose—"The Cossacks! the Cossacks!"

Shots were fired, and yells of rage and pain resounded through the still night. The general started up, sprang on his wearied horse, and fled. Augustus never saw him again. Crouched beneath some branches, which he had collected to replenish his fire, he waited patiently till the tumult subsided.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BEREZINA.

THE French army had now reached the banks of the Berezina, and two frail bridges were hastily thrown across the river. Whilst this was being accomplished, the number of fugitives and carriages of every kind, waiting to cross, increased more and more. Every one wished to be the first on the opposite bank, and none would give way an inch, so that the road was soon completely choked up with horses, cannon, wagons, and men. Almost at the end of the confused mass stood a carriage; some Frenchmen had taken away the horses, which were not yet quite exhausted, to harness them before a cannon. In the carriage lay Augustus's colonel, wounded and helpless.

"Look to your safety, my children," said he to Mary and to Sergeant Hoyer, who still kept his place on the coach-box, "Leave me to my fate,—I have learnt to look death in the face without quailing, even should he come armed with a knout instead of his scythe."

"God forbid, honoured colonel!" replied Hoyer. "He must be a bad soldier, who would leave the father of the regiment in the lurch. Besides, we are caught here like mice in a trap, and can neither advance nor retreat. We must wait, till the enemy's bullets have cleared the way."

The colonel only answered with a deep sigh. "Are you hungry, dear child?" asked he, turning to Mary. The poor girl shook her head in reply, though her famished looks told plainly to the contrary.

Night came on, and with it the confusion increased. It reached its highest pitch when the Russians began, on the following

day, to rain a shower of bullets among the dense mass of fugitives. Thousands were thrown down, trampled under foot, and run over, and thousands perished by the enemy's fire.

"Save yourselves who can?" was the cry. The wounded men and the women were driven without mercy from the carriages, which were then piled in heaps and burnt.

Several soldiers approached the carriage in which the colonel lay, when Hoyer jumped angrily up. "Comrades!" shouted he, "would you burn us like rats? In this carriage lies my honoured colonel, who has fought sixteen battles, and received thirteen wounds in your Emperor's service. Have you no regard for an officer of the legion, that you can't leave him to die in quiet, and respect the coffin of a brave soldier?"

The Frenchmen, some of whom understood German, looked at each other irreso-

lutely, spoke a few words among themselves, and went away. Hoyer watched them narrowly.

"Mary," cried he, eagerly, "did you see what yonder Frenchman was doing on the powder wagon?"

"No," answered Mary.

"Do you see nothing there?—my eyes have become so weak."

"I see a thin smoke, like that from a lighted pipe."

"I knew it," muttered Hoyer—"Lord have mercy upon us!"

"The bridge is burning! we are all lost!" was now the cry, and a wild lamentation arose.

"Yes, we are done for now," said Hoyer to himself. "In ten minutes, we shall be burnt, or at least blown into the air. Well, at any rate, we shall not die of cold, and perhaps it's all for the best, for we shall be the sooner out of our misery; still

a man should do his best to lengthen his life, and moreover I pity the poor innocent child. But what's to be done? Wounded as I am, I can't even leave the carriage without help, and poor little Mary here can't force her way through the crowd to take away the match.—Well, I'll try if any one will do it."

"Holloa!" continued he, as loud as he could—"the powder wagons yonder will explode presently. Who will save all our lives by pulling away the match which those rascally Frenchmen have lighted?"

These words produced an effect entirely opposite to the sergeant's intention. A panic fear came upon all who heard them, and all endeavoured to escape from the dangerous neighbourhood by precipitate flight. In a few minutes only the wounded and exhausted men remained, so that the space around grew somewhat clearer. But the match smouldered slowly on, and Hoyer

began to despair of any succour arriving in time to save them.

"Are you afraid to die, Mary?" asked he.

"No," replied the child, in a weak voice, "I shall be in Heaven then, and have no more cold and misery to endure."

"You are right, dear child," said the sergeant with emotion; "let us pray to God to forgive us our sins, for His Son's sake."

And amid the turmoil of death and destruction, the feeble voice of that little child rose in supplication to Him who has taught us by the mouth of Infinite Wisdom, that "of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

But a new actor appeared on the scene. "Augustus—there is Augustus!" shrieked Mary, and fell into his arms.

"Hurrah!" cried Hoyer, joyfully. "Are you still alive, my boy! Throw yourself on the ground, and perhaps you may yet escape. The match on the powder wagon yonder will set fire to it in a couple of

minutes. Hurrah! now I should like to live a little longer myself—shouldn't you, Mary? Even the colonel would rally, if he could see the boy."

Following the direction of Hoyer's eye, Augustus at once comprehended the danger which menaced them. Running to the wagon, he pulled away the match, and hastily shut the lid.

Surrounded as they were by the horrors death, the three friends forgot everything in the joy of meeting one another. The colonel, however, was past all emotion; he lay in the carriage, almost insensible. But their joy did not last long. Shots were fired more and more frequently, and at length a cannon ball grazed the carriage, and shattered one of the hind wheels. A splinter struck Augustus on the head, and at the same moment the carriage fell on his leg and broke it. With a piercing shriek he swooned away.

When he recovered his senses, it was night, and the stars were shining brightly. The carriage still lay on his leg, and within it all was still; Hoyer was still on the coach-box, asleep from sheer exhaustion. At a short distance Augustus could hear a noise, which proceeded from the Russians, who were plundering the wagons and making prisoners.

Help, whether it came from friend or foe, was now most sorely needed. After endeavouring in vain to draw his broken limb from under the carriage, he at length began to call out for help—but nobody heard him.

Just then, he descried his drum lying close beside him. Here was a means of making himself heard. Drawing the instrument towards him, he seized his drumsticks, and commenced beating a loud tattoo. The effect of this proceeding was first manifest in the carriage. Little Mary began crying in her sleep, and said—"Stoop, Augustus,

or the bullets will hit you." Hoyer's deep voice grumbled from the box—"Directly, captain; only wait till I've got my sword!" Even the colonel cried in delirium—"Forward, lads, forward! Strike down all! Give no quarter!"

At the sound of the drum, a wounded man, who lay close by, raised himself on his elbow. His wasted face was pale as death itself, and his glassy eyes gleamed spectrally in the moonlight. With teeth chattering with cold and horror, he stammered out—"Woman, leave me—it was not I this time! —I only did it once—how could I tell that it would hurt the child! Let me go, I say! —Why do you claw me so?" With the strength of desperation he rose to his feet, staggered forward a few paces, and fell down dead.

The drumsticks fell from our hero's hands, and he sat gazing in speechless horror at the fallen man. He to whom alone ven-

geance belongeth had in His own good time repaid the slayer;—stretched at Augustus's feet lay his bitterest enemy—the murderer of his sister—Döhnert, the drummer.

A file of Russians now approached the carriage. Mary, now fully awake, instantly recognised in one of them a quondam pupil of Augustus, and cried out, "Bibikoff, help your teacher—don't you know us?"

This appeal, in the Russian language, procured for them a fate more bearable than that of the remaining prisoners. Their money was indeed taken from them, but they were cared for as well as circumstances would allow. The three wounded ones recovered slowly, but effectually, in a Russian hospital.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RETURN HOME.

A SUMMER and two winters had passed away. The cottages in Mary's native village had all been rebuilt, and a handsome church stood on the site of the old one; but the mill was still a blackened ruin. It was in the spring of the year 1814, and the feathered denizens of the woods were chirping among the fresh green of the trees. Not a trace of war was left, save here and there the bleached rib or skull of a horse.

On a fine sunny afternoon a clumsy Russian vehicle came rolling into the village, and stopped before the ruined mill. Our old acquaintance, Master Naumann, handed out his wife and two children.

"Here we are at last"—began he after a pause, during which all had stood sorrow-

fully regarding their once thriving home.

“But how are we to rebuild the mill?”

“Dear husband, do not let us stay here,” replied his wife. “I could never sleep in quiet in the place where my poor Mary lost her life. I should continually fancy I heard her screams.”

“I feel much in the same way,” replied the miller, thoughtfully. “But tell me, what are we to do? Of course I should like to return to my native country, the more so, as our neighbours bear me a grudge, because I would not burn my mill during the war. But poor as I am, I can scarcely return to Germany. What might I get for the ground? A trifle, perhaps.”

A troop of men, all wearing coats of coarse cloth over shabby uniforms, and carrying stout sticks, now appeared in view. They were German prisoners, who had been set free at the conclusion of the war, and were now returning to their

homes. As they drew near, four persons separated themselves from the rest, and approached the mill. They were Augustus, the Colonel, Sergeant Hoyer, and Mary. The child flew with a scream of delight into the arms of her parents, who could scarcely believe their eyes, when they saw the daughter whom they had so long mourned as dead. Explanations were hurriedly given, and Augustus was overwhelmed with thanks and praises.

“But I cannot reward you for your heroic action,” said Naumann, after a pause.—
“The war has almost ruined me.”

On hearing these words, Augustus contrived to slip away unperceived. He had preferred saying nothing about the money he had buried in the cellar, until he had made sure it was still there. Trembling with excitement, he began scraping away the earth he had piled upon his treasure, and soon found, to his great joy, that

nothing had been disturbed. The knapsack had burst asunder, and the barrels were worm-eaten, but the gold was still there. After filling his pockets, he rejoined his comrades. Young as Augustus was, he had already had sufficient experience to know that gold often breeds discord even amongst the best friends, and therefore he thought it right to secure for himself at least a portion of his money. With his countenance radiant with good news, he rejoined the others.

“During our retreat,” he began, “I secreted a considerable treasure in this mill, and I propose that we share it in the following manner:—Master Naumann must receive a third part, as proprietor of the ground on which it is hidden. The remaining two-thirds should be divided amongst us poor wanderers.—Do you agree to this?” All the hearers listened to him in great astonishment, and the colonel was the first who answered.

"I rejoice at your good fortune," said he,—“and for my part, I only ask for a small loan to pay my expenses on the journey home. I have enough property, and therefore require no more.”

Old Sergeant Hoyer looked at his hands, on which only two whole fingers and three halves were left, and said, smiling, “I cannot work, that’s very sure—and I’m ashamed to beg. So I’ll take my share, and God bless you, my boy!”

The miller and his wife were almost beside themselves for joy, and nearly stifled the little treasure-seeker with caresses. The money was now secretly brought out of the cellar, deposited in the carriage, and carefully covered over, lest any of the inhabitants of the village should suspect what was going on. They then all mounted the vehicle, and quitted the village. Naumann determined to return with the rest to Germany, and purchase a mill with his share of

the treasure. In the next town the spoil was divided, and an additional carriage procured. As they were about to resume their journey, a party of their former companions came up, and looked curiously at them, wondering how they had procured such a luxury as a carriage. One man stepped forward, and begged the colonel that he might travel with him. This was no other than the haughty lieutenant, who had by this time grown considerably less haughty and more conciliating.

“Sir,” replied the colonel, “the carriage does not belong to me, but to my two comrades here. If they will take you, I have no objection.”

This time the officer did not consider it “altogether beneath his dignity” to speak kindly to his subordinates. They welcomed him cordially, and willingly granted his request.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

ONE day in the beginning of May, 1814, Master Wunsch stood in his workshop, cutting leather. He was alone, and there would not even have been room for workmen, as the whole place was full of household furniture and beds. Everything around wore an aspect of poverty, and it was easy to see that the world had not gone prosperously with the saddler. Suddenly the door opened, and a man in travelling attire entered.

“Good morrow to you, friend Wunsch,” said he, cheerfully.

Wunsch looked up, and his melancholy face brightened immediately. He shook his visitor warmly by the hand, saying, with surprise, “Are you come back at last, old

schoolfellow, Naumann? Where have you been hiding, all these years?"

"In Russia," replied the other. "I had built a mill, and married a wife; but during the war the French burnt the mill, so I have returned here with all my family."

"And what do you intend doing?" asked the saddler.

"I must buy a mill, or rent one."

"Have you money?"

"No; but I have good friends, who will no doubt assist me. There is yourself, for instance—you are no doubt in good circumstances, and have plenty of custom and credit. You could do much for me."

"Poor companion in misfortune," said Wunsch, with a bitter smile, "you are woefully deceived. I had all you mention, but I have it no longer. You see around me the miserable wreck of my former possessions. This workshop, which serves me also for a dwelling-house, is only mine for a few days longer. Then it will be sold to pay

my debts, and I must go. Yes, yes, friend Naumann, the war has robbed me of all my fortune, and more—far more.”

“How do you mean—more?” asked Naumann, incredulously.

“It has robbed me of two children,” answered the saddler, turning gloomily away. He went to a kind of dark outhouse, which was used as a kitchen, and called out—“Come hither, dear wife; an old friend of mine has come, and little Emily is lying awake in her cradle.—Come and feed her, before she annoys us with her crying.”

Mrs. Wunsch bade the stranger kindly welcome, and took her little daughter out of the cradle.

“A pretty child,” said Naumann.

“That is true,” answered the father,—“but I had rather it had been a boy—I should have christened it Augustus.”

“Why so? Do you love boys more than girls?”

“No,” replied Wunsch; “besides, Heaven

has kindly sent this child to comfort me for the loss of my former little Emily. But my poor boy."

The saddler could say no more, but turned away to hide his emotion.

"What about your son?" asked Naumann, in a sympathizing voice.

"He died for me," sobbed Wunsch, "a bitter death, to save me. Bless thee, dear child!" added he, solemnly, "Heaven bless thee, even in eternity."

Mrs. Wunsch bent over the child in her lap, and wept bitterly.

"How did it happen?" asked Naumann, after a pause.

"Spare me the detail," said Wunsch. "You must have seen and heard in what a fearful manner the soldiers perished in Russia,—through battle, cold, and hunger. My son died in this way."

"But are you sure of that?" again asked the miller. "Many German prisoners of

war are now returning from Russia, and I myself am the bearer of a letter from a young drummer, born in this town."

"A young drummer, from this town!" cried the saddler and his wife, in one breath. Both trembled with expectation, and grew red and pale by turns.

"It is as I say," said Naumann, quietly, putting his hand in his pocket. "The direction has been hastily written, and has become illegible during the long journey."

Wunsch rushed forward and seized the letter. "It is my son's writing," shouted he, after glancing for a moment at the address. In the tumult of his joy he almost tore the letter in pieces, instead of reading it.

Mrs. Wunsch started up, and holding the screaming baby in one arm, was in a moment at her husband's side, gazing at the letter both were almost too excited to read. Its contents were merely—

“MY DEAREST PARENTS,

“I am still alive, and well. In another moment I shall be with you.

“AUGUSTUS.”

The door was thrown violently open. Bertha and Robert rushed in, holding their school-books in one hand and dragging Augustus in by the other.

His parents fell upon his neck, and for the next few minutes nothing was heard but a confused noise of laughter and weeping, and disjointed exclamations.

In the meantime the room had become filled with spectators. The colonel, the lieutenant, Hoyer, and Naumann's wife and children, among whom Mary was foremost, stood round looking on the scene with tearful eyes.

When the tumult of greeting had somewhat subsided, Augustus said—“I have brought a keepsake for you, which we will

treasure up as a remembrance of the days gone by,"—and he drew forth his drumsticks. "These I have saved, but the drum itself I lost in Russia."

"There's another little remembrance," said Hoyer, smiling, and pointing to the table, on which the men had in the meantime placed several bags of gold.

"That's more than my share," cried Augustus, hastily.

"By your leave," continued Hoyer, "I have added my share to it. If you have a little room in the house, to give to an old soldier, who doesn't require much, and who, though his fingers are absent without leave, can rock a cradle and make himself generally useful—I'll engage it for myself. My honoured colonel has promised to procure my discharge."

"And we will remain here too," said Naumann, "and hire a mill somewhere in the neighbourhood. We'll make one family,

and forget all our troubles. You see, friend Wunsch, you can buy your house back again, and still have something left."

"You are heartily welcome, all of you!" cried Master Wunsch, joyfully. "Gentlemen, you are, I hope, my guests to-day, and will take things as you find them. And let us thank Heaven for its great mercy, in not tempting us beyond what we were able to bear, but ordering all for the best, in its infinite wisdom—Heaven be praised for all things!—And soon may war be talked of among men as an evil thing that has passed away for ever!"

THE END.

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